HISTORY OF
THE FREEDOM MOVEMENT
IN INDIA

VOLUME ONE

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BY

TARA CHAND

FOREWORD BY

HUMAYUN KABIR

THE PUBLICATIONS DIVISION

MINISTRY OF INFORMATION AND BROADCASTING

FOREWORD

The whole course of human history proves that power as well as excellence has always followed knowledge. It was man's capacity to learn which gave him pre-eminence among all living beings. Among men, pre-eminence has come to those who have the greatest capacity to acquire and use knowledge. Priests and magicians in ancient times exercised their dominance through superior knowledge and sought to guard it as a precious secret. They did not realise that the attempt to hide or restrict knowledge is self-defeating and ultimately leads to loss of knowledge as well as excellence and power. Indian history offers many examples of how the people have suffered through the restriction of knowledge to selected groups and coteries.

Unlike material wealth, knowledge increases only through dispersal and distribution. Aurangzeb had in many respects an extremely narrow outlook and sought to maintain his authority on the basis of exclusiveness, but he was also one of the few Indian emperors who realised the importance of knowledge as an instrument for the maintenance of power. When a scholar sought special treatment on the ground of having taught him, Aurangzeb rejected the claim and said, "If you had taught me that philosophy which adapts the mind to reason, and will not suffer it to rest satisfied with anything short of the most solid arguments, if you had made me acquainted with the nature of man, accustomed me always to refer to first principles, and given me a sublime and adequate conception of the universe, and of the order and regular motion of its parts, I would have been more indebted to you than Alexander was to Aristotle." Aurangzeb also declared that for a ruler, it was necessary to be "acquainted with the distinguishing features of every nation of the earth; its resources and strength; its modes of warfare; its manners, religion, form of government". He recognised that it was part of the training of a king to become, through a regular course of historical reading, "familiar with the origin of States, their

progress and decline; the events, accidents or errors owing to which great changes and mighty revolutions have been effected".

It is interesting to speculate what might have been the course of Indian history if Aurangzeb with his undoubted intellectual powers had received such training and learnt that the progress and prosperity of nations depends on the dispensation of equal justice to all citizens regardless of religion, race, political views or social status. In any case, one cannot but accept his contention that those who are charged with the administration of human affairs must have knowledge of the basic principles that govern the growth and decline of states and the ways in which human beings respond to different types of treatment.

The importance of such historical studies has increased in the modern age and become a condition for man's survival itself. In the present democratic set-up of the world—and this holds to a large extent even for areas where there is no formal democracy—every individual has a responsibility for the policies and programmes of his country. The interlacing of the fortunes of different countries through the progress of science and technology has further ensured that the responsibility of the individual extends beyond the frontiers of his own land and ultimately encompasses the whole world. Since whatever happens in any one country has repercussions in all other countries, the individual citizen has thus a greater concern with the fate of mankind today than even kings or princes in earlier times. Aurangzeb had realised that historical education was necessary for princes. Today, such education is essential for all citizens of a democratic republic like India.

India's experience of subjection to a foreign power for almost two centuries had made Indians sensitive to the causes of the decline and downfall of peoples. As they won back their freedom step by step, they sought to enshrine the lesson so that there may be no repetition of that earlier tragic story. Besides, both the manner in which India lost her freedom and the way in which she regained it had certain unique features that make her history one of great significance for the whole world. In particular, the technique of non-violent struggle

developed by Mahatma Gandhi seems to offer a solution to one of the most vexed problems of human relations. It was therefore not surprising that at the very first meeting of the Indian Historical Records Commission held after India became free, a resolution was passed for preparing an authentic and comprehensive history of the different phases of the Indian struggle for independence. This recommendation found an immediate response from the late Maulana Abul Kalam Azad who directed that steps should forthwith be taken to give effect to it.

There were some who thought that the work might be executed through an official agency but it was soon realised that such agencies might not prove suitable for the purpose. For one thing, any government organisation is bound to reflect the views and opinions of the government of the day while considerations of national interest as well as historical veracity demand that the history of the Indian freedom movement must be objective and unbiased. For another, the raw materials of such history are scattered throughout the country and often rest with men who had actively participated in the freedom struggle. It seemed doubtful if a government agency with its standardised methods would be able to draw upon their knowledge by accommodating their predilections and idiosyncrasies. An effort on a national scale was thus necessary to collect the vast amount of material lying in government and private archives and with men and women who had actively participated in the later phases of the struggle.

As a first step, an expert committee of distinguished scholars was set up under the Chairmanship of Dr. Tara Chand, then Educational Adviser to the Government of India. Its major terms of reference were to suggest ways and means for organising the collection of material and taking other steps for the preparation of the history. The Committee recommended that besides a central organisation composed of historians and political workers, regional committees with a similar composition should be set up in different parts of the country. Accordingly, a Central Board of Editors was set up with Dr. Syed Mahmud as Chairman and Shri S. N. Ghose

as Secretary. Addressing the first meeting of the Board in January 1953, Maulana Azad stressed the need for an objective and impartial account of the history of the freedom movement. With the attainment of independence, it was both possible and necessary to avoid passion, for passion distorts judgement and action based on such judgements would be against the national interest. He also pointed out that while it would be primarily a history of the political struggle, it would have to give weight to national awakening in other fields like literature, education, social reform and scientific and industrial development.

The Board functioned for a period of three years and with the help of its regional committees, collected a large volume of material relating to almost every aspect of the national awakening in India. It used not only the Government archives at the Centre and in the States, and both national and local newspapers, but also the evidence of individuals belonging to different political schools and holding diverse social and economic views. It also contacted sources outside India in its effort to make the material as exhaustive as possible.

The Board rendered very useful service but it soon became clear that an ad hoc body set up on a temporary basis could not complete the work of collecting the necessary material, still less prepare a unified history by sifting and interpreting the data. It included both academic historians and active politicians and the differences in their approach were seen even at the stage of collection of data. These differences became still more marked when it came to interpreting the material that had already been collected. It was therefore decided to transfer the work of further collection to the National Archives and of interpretation and narration to one single scholar of distinction. Accordingly, Dr. Tara Chand who had been Chairman of the Planning Committee at an earlier stage and had a special competence for the task was entrusted with the work of sifting the material and preparing a unified history of the Indian freedom movement.

As readers will see for themselves, Dr. Tara Chand has adopted a wide and imaginative approach and presented not

only a comprehensive account of conditions in India on the eve of British rule but also undertaken comparative studies in Indian and European history in order to focus our attention on the causes which led to the progress of Britain and the decline of India in the period under review. His treatment is objective and historical and he has sought to award praise and blame according to historical standards rather than national or racial prejudices. The analysis and opinion are his alone, and while one may not accept all his conclusions and interpretations, I am sure that every one will agree that he has marshalled his facts with consummate skill and artistry.

The story of the loss and recovery of Indian independence presents one of the most fascinating subjects of study in human history. A people with a proud and glorious past, highly developed arts and crafts and almost unlimited human and material resources had to suffer humiliation and defeat because they had neither learnt that strength lies in the spread of national feeling through all strata of society nor kept abreast of the progress of science and technology in the outside world. Their regeneration began when the humiliation of defeat brought about an enhanced national consciousness and the foreign rulers introduced the explosive forces of modern education and science into an ancient society. The ferment which was initiated is to this day reaching every level of national life and bringing about far-reaching changes in social organisation, intellectual attitudes and even religious beliefs and practices. When the national awakening brought back national self-respect, India again became free, though she was naturally helped in the process by the play of world forces culminating in the Second World War.

It is intended that the story of the Indian freedom movement will be told in three volumes of about four to five hundred pages each. The first volume which is being released today—two hundred years after the third battle of Panipat which made British hegemony of India almost inevitable—deals with the social, political, cultural and economic conditions of India in the eighteenth century against the background of the historical processes that had in

earlier times shaped the life and history of the Indian people. It also gives an overall picture of the developments which ushered in the modern age in Europe in order to make it easier for us to understand the impact of the new dynamism of the West on the comparatively static Indian society.

A work of such magnitude could not have been accomplished without the cooperation of many official and unofficial organisations and of men and women, both in India and abroad. We owe a debt of gratitude to them all for their help in the completion of a national task. We are still more indebted to Dr. Tara Chand and his colleagues for the devotion and care with which they have sifted the voluminous mass of material and sought to discover the underlying principles which have given direction and unity to the diverse and at times conflicting tendencies that characterised Indo-British relations during this transitional but revolutionary period.

New Delhi, HUMAYUN KABIR
January 26, 1961

PREFACE

In undertaking to write the History of the Freedom Movement, I was faced with a number of problems. Where should the history begin ? One answer was : from the foundation of the Indian National Congress in 1885. But the Congress was the organised expression of a growing national movement, and without tracing the history of the rise of national consciousness it would be impossible to explain the emergence of the Congress. When did then national consciousness arise? In the flaming holocaust of 1857, or earlier? It was necessary inevitably to go back to Ram Mohan Roy. But Ram Mohan Roy was the product of the impact of the British conquest. The conclusion was inescapable that the nature of the impact from its earliest stages required study and explanation.

Another question was even more difficult to answer. I had to trace the history of the freedom movement and not merely to relate the story of the achievement of independence. Independence is a negative concept. Its implication is absence of dependence; it has no positive connotation; it does not indicate the quality and character of the society which achieves political sovereignty after throwing off alien domination. Freedom is more than the mere absence of foreign control, for it implies a society possessing certain positive attributes—a capacity to order its affairs in accordance with the will of the people, and a democratic way of life guaranteeing liberty and equality to all its members.

As a result of the British intervention in the eighteenth century India lost independence, but under British tutelage which lasted for nearly two centuries it gained freedom. This raised two connected problems. Why did India lose independence and what did this loss imply in material and moral terms ? And secondly how did India qualify itself for attaining freedom ? Europe had progressed from independence to freedom and it had traversed this journey in more than a thousand years—from the settlement of the

Teutonic tribes in the provinces of the Roman Empire to the eighteenth century,—but it had not experienced foreign occupation and rule. India, on the other hand, had to surrender the sovereign power before setting out on the perilous voyage which led to self-government, and it had to complete the stages of the journey in one-fifth of the time taken by Europe.

It appeared to me that I should explain, howsoever briefly, the experience of the West in order to explain what happened in India. I have therefore ventured to summarise the history of the developments in Europe in the introduction to the story of India's freedom.

The achievement of freedom by India is a unique phenomenon. It is the transformation of a civilisation into a nationality. It is the fulfilment of nationality through the establishment of national sovereignty. It is throughout the course of its advance a movement directed as much against the violence of the other as against the unreason of the self. In essence it is an ethical struggle both in relation to the foreigner as well as members of its own body. And where similar struggles have been accompanied with bloodshed, the movement in India, though intense and accompanied with much suffering, was non-violent.

The history of freedom is a dialectic process. Its first step was antithetical in so far as it amounted to the destruction of the old order. This is the argument of the process which started in the middle of the eighteenth century and culminated in the revolt of 1857. The second step is the emergence of a new order which gradually gathers momentum during the half century after 1857. The third step is one of conflict and synthesis of the spirit of the old order and the new, of the East and the West, and the coming into the world of a new individual—the Indian nation State.

I have treated this dialectical theme in three volumes, of which this first one deals with the first term of the argument.

The idea that a history of the freedom movement ought to be written emanated from the late Maulana Abul Kalam Azad, the then Minister of Education, Government of India. Maulana Azad was a rare combination of scholar and statesman, of old-world refinement and culture and modern ardour

for freedom and progress. He spent the greater part of his life in the struggle. He staked his all in the service of the cause. All his powers—his matchless eloquence, his balanced judgement, his wise counsel, his broad-minded patriotism, his burning zeal, his pride, his idealism—he laid at the altar of India's freedom. Yet in the midst of the fiercest struggle and during the short intervals of calm, he never deviated from his devotion to learning. He had a prodigious memory and his mind was a storehouse of poetry in many languages—Urdu, Persian and Arabic—of the history of many countries, and of religious lore. He was never more happy than when he was surrounded by his books or engaged in his literary pursuits. Freedom for India was his passion, and after its achievement the narration of its epic story was his dearly cherished wish.

I had the privilege of working with him in the Ministry of Education for about four years and he knew of my interest in history. When therefore he asked me to take up this work I gladly accepted the offer. I am grateful to him for giving me the opportunity to accomplish a task dear to my heart. He arranged to place at my disposal the services of three scholars to help me—Dr. V. G. Dighe, Dr. R. K. Parmu and Dr. B. M. Bhatia. They have all worked ungrudgingly and with whole-hearted devotion. They have made a notable contribution in the writing of this book and I am grateful to them for their invaluable assistance in the completion of this volume. My thanks are due to Shri Humayun Kabir, the Minister of Scientific Research and Cultural Affairs, for his support. I greatly appreciate his concern and solicitude in this work, for without his interest it would not have been possible to overcome many difficulties, especially those of publication. I am grateful to the Director of the National Archives of India, and the Librarian of the National Library of Calcutta for allowing me free access to their records and books.

New Delhi, TARA CHAND
January 5, 1961

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INTRODUCTION

I. RETROSPECT

In the eighteenth century India passed under the sway of Britain. Almost for the first time in her history an alien people whose homeland lay at a distance of several thousand miles from India assumed the reins of her government and the guidance of her destinies. Such an occupation of the country was a new experience. For, although in the past India had suffered many invasions, and from time to time parts of the Indian territory had fallen temporarily under the dominion of the conquerors, the occasions had been few and their duration short. For example, the Achaemenian empire of Persia included the border lands of India and extracted tribute from the Indus valley; the Kushans extended their conquests over Kashmir and north-west India and ruled these territories for more than a century. The intrusions of the Hunas, Sakas and Pahlavas were no more than passing incidents. The Ghaznavid dominion included the Panjab, and the Arabs ruled in Sind. Besides these episodes of temporary rule, India suffered many invasions. But the whirlwind campaigns of the invaders harried the land for a while and then passed away. Among them the important ones were Alexander, Timur, Nadir Shah and Ahmad Shah Abdali. The only conquerors who established permanent empires over the greater part of India were the Turks in the early Middle Ages, and the Chaghtai Mughals later.

The Kushan conquerors who exercised control over north-western India became completely Indianised. They adopted Indian religions, Indian languages and Indian customs. They were merged in the Indian society. The early Muslim conquerors, who came from Afghanistan or Central Asia, however, had a different history. The Muslim soldiers and captains, learned men and merchants who followed in the wake of Mahmud of Ghazni, Shahab-ud-Din Ghori, or Babar, did not, like the Hunas, Scythians and Kushans, lose their

identity in India. They continued to adhere to their religion and retained much of their culture. But they chose to stay permanently in this country, broke with their foreign moorings, and cast their lot with the Indian people. Practical needs of life compelled them to enter into increasing social relations with their subjects. Under the pressure of the new environment, and in the interests of administration, they modified their own notions of government, law and order. They shed many of their foreign manners and customs, and absorbed elements of Indian life and culture. India was enriched by the addition of a new religion to her repertory of faiths, and the variety of her multicoloured civilisation was diversified by the infusion of new elements.

Thus, although Muslim conquest brought about many political and cultural changes in the ancient societies of India, much of the foundation and structure of her old culture remained. The Indian peoples gave much to the new-comers and received a great deal in return. They learnt the new social ways introduced by the conquerors. The impact of Muslim religion with its emphasis upon strict monotheism and egalitarian philosophy of social organisation evoked reactions, and the Hindu religious and social systems were stirred by movements which brought about an approximation of attitudes and practices between the two. The languages and literatures of the Muslims exercised a pervasive influence on the speech and writing of the Hindus. New words, phrases and literary forms took root in the soil and new motifs and themes enriched their thought. A new literary language was evolved and many of the Middle Indo-Aryan dialects blossomed into modern literary languages. In architecture, painting, music and the minor arts, profound changes occurred and new styles made their appearance in which the elements of both were fused. The process which had begun in the thirteenth century continued for five hundred years.

In the sixteenth century Babar overthrew the Afghan dynasty of the Lodi family. His successors identified themselves closely with the interests of India and followed, on the whole, policies which gave a great impetus to the tendencies of political unification and cultural harmony. The expansion of the Mughal empire over the greater parts of India had profound consequences. It steam-rollered the ancient tribal principalities and autonomous states. It reduced the old plurality of political units, whose autonomy was limited from time to time

by the overlordship of such empires as that of the Mauryas, Kushans or Guptas, into the near unity of an empire directly administered from the centre, leaving a fringe of semi-independent chieftaincies and a sprinkling of feudatories and dependencies on the border.

The Mughal emperors and their great functionaries were enlightened patrons of art and literature. Modern Indian languages like Braj, Avadhi, Bengali, Marathi and others, which had become vehicles of reformed Hinduism, and organs of the cult of *bhakti* (the religion of love and service), received the stimulus of royal favour. The courts of the emperor and his provincial governors became centres of art and culture. The Hindu rulers of the hill states, Rajasthan, central India and the Deccan, imitated the styles evolved under the patronage of the Mughals.

The Mughal political system and the cultural ideals of India were founded upon a socio-economic base which, apart from modifications of detail, retained substantial identity throughout the ancient and medieval epochs of history. Its beginnings may be traced back to the first settlements of the Aryans in India.

This socio-economic continuity is the distinguishing mark of Indian history. The harmony found in the many-sided culture of the peoples of India stems from this source. Thus, although India has many religions, many languages, many races, its fundamental attitudes towards life have persisted through centuries and millennia. There is a peculiarly Indian flavour which pervades the multiplicity of cultures during the ages. It is a remarkable fact that the socio-economic structure of India, which originated in the settlement of the Aryans and their assimilation of the pre-Aryan inhabitants of India, continued without any radical change till the nineteenth century. The explanation appears to be that unlike that of Europe, India's racial mould was set once and for all and was little disturbed in the succeeding times. This happened when the Aryan migrant groups came—possibly in several waves—and occupied the different regions of the country. In each region the original inhabitants were absorbed in different ways and in different numbers, and thus in these different territories different social organisms were established. But all bore in varying degrees the stamp of Aryanism, and the traditions once formed were not subsequently altered by racial displacements and disturbances. These traditions were a synthesis of the Aryan, Dravidian and aboriginal elements in India's population. As neither

temporary incursions nor permanent conquests affected to any appreciable extent the mass of population, there was no root and branch modification of the traditions. The immigration of such tribes as Jats, Gujars, Sakas and Hunas in later times did not prove more than the rush of little rillets into the ocean where they are lost in its immensity.

When the Muslim conquerors established their empire in the thirteenth century, a new culture made its entry in India. Then the old and the new met and exchanges took place between them. In the process a complex situation arose.

The ethnic and economic basis of society underwent the least change. The village continued to function as the self-sufficient unit of group life. Industry and trade were carried on without any basic modification of organisation or methods. Stratification of Hindu and Muslim society into two classes, of the privileged ruling land-owning aristocracy and the unprivileged masses, not participating in governmental functions, persisted. The political system underwent no change. The ties which held the government and the people together were scant and fragile, for the functions of the state were extremely limited—maintenance of an army for purposes of defence and prevention of lawlessness, and collection of revenues for the upkeep of the army. Legislation was beyond its scope, and so was much of judicial administration. There were no law-making organs, and civil and personal causes were largely determined by non-official agencies.

So far as religion was concerned, although the lower classes remained steeped in their superstition, and the intellectuals were little affected, there was much of give and take. New sects and creeds arose among the Hindus under the influence of Islam; and Muslim groups of broad-minded Sufis and scholars adopted Hindu philosophical doctrines and methods of inner discipline. In the creative fields of literature and art, there was a great deal of assimilation of the Hindu and Muslim styles. But there was least mutual adaptation in the sphere of law.

Cultural rapprochement there certainly was; however, it failed to generate national consciousness, for the hard moulds into which groups and communities were enveloped, did not permit them to be fused together.

The state did not foster this consciousness, and apart from the contacts which grew between peoples as a consequence of living together in the same land, little deliberate effort was made to create

the sentiment of unity. Nor did economic and social developments engender the feeling of territorial patriotism or a sense of identification of the individual with the entire inhabitants of the land.

At the beginning of the eighteenth century the Mughal structure began to crumble, and as the century advanced the decline became accelerated. The weakness of the central authority reacted upon the economic life of the State; its revenue dwindled, communications were disturbed; industry, trade and agriculture tended to become localised. Centrifugal forces began to dominate, law and order were disrupted, public and private morality was shaken, the empire was split into fragments and its power to resist the encroachments of foreign and internal foes was shattered.

It was at this juncture that the agents of European nations started intervening in Indian affairs.

When in 1498 Vasco da Gama disembarked at the port of Calicut a new era began in the relations between Asia and Europe. The push and pull of the ancient rivalry between the two continents had ended in the fifteenth century with the retreat of the Moors from the Hispanic peninsula, and a fresh push by the Turks in the Balkans. The Spaniards and the Portuguese in their pursuit of the Muslims scoured the oceans, and endeavoured to join the Christian forces of the West with the legendary kingdom of Prester John in Abyssinia, and thus by a pincer movement to crush the Musalmans of North Africa and western Asia. In the pursuit of their strategic aims they circumnavigated Africa, crossed the Arabian Sea, and appeared on the western coast of India.

The Portuguese adventure had far-reaching consequences. In the first place, it drove Turkish and Arab shipping out of the Indian waters and thus brought to an end the peaceful commercial intercourse which had subsisted between India and her West-Asian neighbours since the times of the Abbasid caliphate and before. India's exports and imports used to be transported in Indian and Asian ships. They were transferred to the Portuguese bottoms and a mortal blow was struck at the Indian shipping industry. In the second place, as Indian maritime activity ceased, Indian cultural relations with South-East Asia were cut off and the countries beyond the Gangetic region from Burma to Indonesia passed out of the orbit of Indian influence. The progress of Indian culture which had inspired the magnificent monumental achievements of Thailand, Indo-China

and Indonesia, which had helped to rear the great empires striding across Malaya, Sumatra, Java and the islands of the Eastern Archipelago and which brought a new religion and civilisation to the peoples of these regions, was suddenly terminated.

Above all, the Portuguese advent on the Indian coast was a portent. A renascent, self-confident Europe, galvanised into activity by new discoveries in science, by new ideals of the dignity of man and solidarity of society, by new visions of material progress and national power, began knocking at the gates of the wealthiest country in the East.

But the India of Akbar the Great and Shah Jahan the Magnificent with its fabulous wealth, far-famed arts, and resplendent culture had lost its dynamism in the eighteenth century. It had become a medieval static conglomeration of villages, castes, clans, tribes and principalities loosely held together under the nominal suzerainty of the Mughal empire. India's economy was agricultural, its technique primitive, its organisation circumscribed, its aim subsistence production. India's industry was organised on a small scale and designed either to produce luxury articles for the use of the rich or to satisfy the simple needs of the local market; money played an insignificant part in it. As against this, Europe was developing trans-oceanic markets and importing American treasures of silver and gold which stimulated trade and industry. Under the urge of rapidly increasing capital, specialisation was growing and the merchant and the banker were overshadowing the landed gentry. India's intellect had not been stirred by the critical scientific movement which was enfranchising the European mind and provoking invention and discovery. India's social and individual behaviour was not stimulated by the strong emotions which were converting the feudal anarchic societies of Europe into well-knit consolidated nations. In Europe the age of religion was passing and the age of reason was on the threshold; in India the outlook of the noblest minds was other-worldly, their highest aspiration, unity with the Supreme.

The seventeenth century marked the zenith of India's glory, the climax of its medieval culture. However, as the centuries succeeded one another, the sun of European civilisation rapidly advanced towards the mid-heavens, but the Indian sky began to darken, and soon gloom settled upon the land and the shadows of moral chaos and political confusion lengthened.

Portugal overstretched herself in the effort to maintain a far-

flung empire. When, therefore, it became an apanage of the Spanish crown in 1580 it fell out of the race. Spain at the beginning of the seventeenth century appeared to have the world at her feet, but her rotten economy and narrow religious bigotry brought her into trouble. Small and young but vigorous countries like the Netherlands, France and England, humbled her pride. They drove her fleets from the seas and seized the lead. Gradually the Netherlands dropped out of the race and by the middle of the eighteenth century France and England remained the only two contenders in the field. In the early stages France seemed to forge ahead. Her novel and bold policies made her influence paramount in the Deccan, but soon the shadow of the internal conflict, which burst out in the Revolution of 1789, stretched across the oceans and the agents of France in India were deprived of that steady support from the home government without which ultimate victory was unattainable. The Seven Years War administered a decisive check to French ambitions, and the field remained in the sole possession of the English.

The English had learnt the methods invented by the French, but surpassed them in their application. They took the fullest advantage of the weaknesses and follies of the Indian rulers and became masters of the whole of India with the help of the Indians themselves. Dominion involved responsibilities. The English had come out to make profit from trade; they used the revenues accruing to the coffers of the state for investment in the production and purchase of Indian goods which they exported. Needs of commerce and of the realisation of land-revenue entailed the establishment of the machinery of administration. Thus it happened that India, carrying the deadweight of a moribund social system, yet the bearer of a rich heritage of art, literature, philosophy and religion, stood face to face with a triumphant, proud and progressive Britain, modern in its moral and material make-up.

This meeting of the East and the West produced results which were curiously contradictory—a mixture of good and evil. The first result was that the Indian economy was transformed and geared to Britain's economy; at the same time poverty, population and pressure upon land increased. A vast material revolution was inaugurated. Secondly, the Indian mind was moved to its depths; on the one hand, the spirit of questioning of authority was born and the Western scientific method was assimilated; on the other, revivalist tendencies

were strengthened and pride in the superiority of the ancients fostered. In consequence, national consciousness was awakened and as a necessary sequel, desire for freedom, embodied in an independent, responsible, democratic state, grew. But this awakening was accompanied with a sinister uprising of communal and sectional feelings. Independence from foreign domination India had enjoyed for long periods in the past, but freedom was a new concept. Perhaps it was not altogether a new concept, for Indian philosophy—Hindu, Buddhist and Muslim—was familiar with the idea of the inner freedom of the spirit. In fact, freedom was its central idea. Yet freedom operating in social and political spheres was a new revelation.

The process of this change is the subject of this book. The transformation of India and the growth of national consciousness was a consequence of the impact of the West. But in the West itself nationallism was a recent phenomenon. In the eighteenth century the phenomenon was confined to the westernmost countries of Europe; thence it spread during the nineteenth century to central and eastern Europe, and afterwards to all the countries of the world.

The emergence of national societies in Europe constitutes the most recent stage of social development. Europe started with feudalism, then in the sixteenth century moved into the mercantilist system, and after the middle of the eighteenth century advanced to industrial capitalism and nationalism. India, on the other hand, retained till the end of the eighteenth century the ancient system which may be compared with European feudalism. Then the shock of the impact of the West broke the ancient mould and forced her into a process of change which culminated in freedom.

Such a world movement is a demonstration of the fact that history cannot be treated parochially and, however isolated peoples living in different regions might appear, they are exposed to influences which pass from continent to continent. Consequently it is not possible to consider developments in one country wholly apart from happenings in other parts of the world. History is essentially world history and from the time man appeared upon the earth, men have been influenced not only by their physical but also their human environment.

It is, for these reasons, necessary to study the history of Western societies, and to follow the growth of nationalism from its beginnings to its consummation for the understanding of the rise of nationalism and the achievement of freedom in India.

II. EVOLUTION OF NATIONALISM IN EUROPE

Disruption of ancient Europe

Nationalism appeared late in Europe, but its roots lie deep in early history. Many factors combined to create European nationalism but their operation belongs to different periods. Of these, two—race and culture—go back to a hoary past. Although the racial composition of the nations of Europe differs from country to country, their principal element is Aryan. They began to settle down in these lands in the second millennium B.C. Of their numerous tribes, the Greeks and the Romans achieved surpassing success and glory. The cultures which they reared have provided the basis upon which the structure of modern European life has been built.

The Greeks and the Romans were the first Aryan settlers. The Greeks were the founders. The Romans spread the classic Hellenic culture throughout the Empire, which stretched from Scotland to Iran and which lasted for many centuries. The Empire was ultimately shattered by the barbarians, who belonged to Aryan stock, but who lived in the lands beyond the Rhine and the Danube. From this second wave of migration of the Aryans ensued consequences of serious import.

The incursion of the provinces by the barbarous Teutonic tribes began early. For several centuries the frontiers stood intact because the Roman emperors had devised a plan of defence which kept the barbarians back. But then internal strains and stresses sapped the strength of the empire and in A.D. 378 its armies suffered a crushing defeat at Adrianople in which Emperor Valens was killed. Within a hundred years Goths, Vandals, Franks and other Teutonic tribes swarmed over and occupied the provinces.

While the Teutonic tribes were battering down the Roman defences, another serious danger appeared. The Huns swept across the Asiatic plains, advanced into southern Russia, subjugated the eastern and western Goths and extended their sway up to the Rhine. Then under their great leader Attila a mighty army crossed the Rhine into Gaul (modern France). However, at the battle of Mauriacus (A.D. 451), Roman honour was saved and the Hun tide receded. This was the last triumph of the Roman arms, for soon after, in A.D. 476, Rome fell into the hands of the Goths and the grand edifice of the Eternal City was laid into dust.

The way of life the Romans had built up became uprooted. The new settlers had brought with them their own manners, customs and institutions, and although the remnants of the classic culture were absorbed by the new people, an entirely new culture arose in Europe.

In the period following the fall of Rome, the invading tribes settled down and tried to evolve a new order. Charlemagne, the ruler of the Franks, even revived the Roman Empire in the eighth century. But in the ninth century the Carolingian system also disintegrated and a third wave of disturbances began. The Northmen or Vikings from the Scandinavian lands, the Slavs from the Baltic coast, the Magyars from the east, and the Saracens from the south, pressed upon the Teutonic societies of Europe. The Vikings carried fire and sword into Britain, France and Germany, and the Slavs, who had long roamed over the imperial territories, settled down in eastern Europe.

The Arabs, who in the meantime had conquered North Africa, crossed into Spain. They overthrew the Gothic kingdoms, pushed across the Pyrenees and penetrated into France. But they were halted at the border by the Franks.

Thus in frightful massacre, turmoil, and violence the foundations of European nations were laid. In the words of Vinogradoff, "the whole period of European history extending roughly from A.D. 476 to A.D. 1000 appears at first sight as an epoch of chaotic fermentation, in which it is almost impossible to perceive directing principles and settled institutions." Tribal migrations had overthrown the Roman Empire; the invasions of the Magyars and the Moors, and the depredations of the Northmen created confusion among the tribal societies which had grown up in succession to the Roman Empire. Conditions extremely insecure for life and property prevailed and they determined the form in which European society was moulded in the Middle Ages. Everywhere the central authority had disappeared and with it the system of State taxation. Large social groups could not sustain themselves because of economic chaos. Production had receded, trade had dwindled and Europe had to start afresh with a natural economy. Protection against violence and provision of the elementary necessities of life were the two main problems of man. Their solution involved the growth of a new social organisation. Towards its development the Roman and the Teutonic traditions and

institutions contributed their share and in consequence the feudal system of society was born.

Rise of feudalism

This feudal society constituted the third Europe. The first Europe, namely, the Graeco-Roman Europe of the city states, had a life cycle of over twelve hundred years from the eighth century B.C. to the end of the fourth century A.D. The second Europe, or Teutonic Europe of tribal societies, rose over the ashes of the first Europe in the fifth century but was in ruins by the end of the ninth. Thus the continuity of European civilisation was shattered twice. The third, or feudal Europe, began its career in the ninth century. It gradually evolved a characteristic type of civilisation which attained its zenith in the thirteenth century.

From the thirteenth century the peoples of western Europe began to emerge from feudalism and to develop into national states. This transformation was the result of a number of revolutions which broke the mould in which Europe had been cast in the Middle Ages, and was completed by the middle of the eighteenth century.

The feudal organisation came into existence in response to the three primary needs of man, namely, (*i*) protection for life, (*ii*) production of commodities to provide for bodily needs, and (*iii*) resolution of inner conflicts through ethical and religious systems.

Bread is necessary for the existence of man, but he does not live by bread alone. He is pressed by the claims of the spirit whose urgency may be far greater than that of the claims of the body. He is swayed by hopes and fears and strives to fulfil or allay them. In the Europe of the Middle Ages, man wanted to escape from the many ills to which life exposed him in those terrible times. His spirit longed for gentler and more ethical ways of behaviour. He felt aversion to social evils, and disgust with corruption, cruelty and violence. In him there was an urge for the fulfilment of the higher aspirations of the mind, a desire to vindicate his dignity and to loosen the heavy chains of social and political acquiescence which stifled his innate freedom.

Thus three factors—military, economic and religious—cooperated in moulding into shape the socio-economic organisation of Europe in the Middle Ages.

It took three hundred years for the system to grow till, in the thirteenth century, it reached its culmination. Then a gradual decline began and ultimately feudal economy was displaced by mercantile capitalism. What happened was that the feudal methods of production proved inadequate to meet the needs of the growing society and snapped the bonds which united the working men with the owners of the means of production. The final dissolution took place at different times in different countries of Europe. In England feudalism disappeared in the seventeenth century, in France at the end of the eighteenth, and in Germany and Russia later.

The essence of the feudal society was a combination of military service with land tenure. This was secured by a peculiar type of relation of dependence between man and man. The superior undertook to protect the dependant and to assure him subsistence; the dependant pledged his services, a share in the product of his labour, aids, obligations and allegiance. Because the need of the dependant was greater, the scales were weighted against him. The bond tying the two was a personal one. It recognised and imposed mutual obligations and created a hierarchic society.

The hierarchy consisted of two classes—the nobility or the superior minority, which owned the land, and the dependent masses —freemen and serfs—who supplied labour and cultivated the land. The landed aristocracy was again divided into two sections—the warriors and the priests. Thus the three orders—those who laboured, those who fought and those who prayed—constituted the three limbs of the feudal organism.

The feudal village

The unit of feudal society was the village, which bore different names in different countries. In England it was called 'manor', in France 'seignieurie' and in Germany 'grundherrschaft'. The village and its domain consisted of buildings, open fields for cultivation, meadows for pasture, and forests for fuel and timber. The village proper was a cluster of the huts and houses of tenants, the mansion of the proprietor, if he lived in the village, and its appurtenances, gardens and in some cases a church. Outside the village were open fields. They were divided into two unequal parts. The smaller part was the reserve of the village proprietor, the lord of the manor or the seigneur, and the larger part was shared among the families of cul-

tivators. The holding of a tenant was termed a virgate or yard-land, and its normal size was thirty acres. Each family of shareholders had a fixed and constant share which varied from four virgates (one hide) to one-half virgate (or one-eighth of a hide). But the share did not form a compact plot, and was not confined to one block. It consisted of a number of long and narrow strips, usually of one acre each (220 yards long and 22 yards broad), which could be ploughed in one day. The strips were scattered all over the open field. They were separated by balks or unploughed turf. Such a distribution necessitated cooperative farming, hence great wheeled ploughs drawn by eight oxen were clubbed together for the purpose. Wheel-less ploughs owned by single peasants were also used.

The village raised all the crops required for subsistence—food crops like wheat and rye; drink crops like barley and grapes; cattle-feed crops like oats, beans, and peas; and crops for textiles like flax. The system of growing the crops was based upon one, two or three fields. The return was poor as the technique was primitive, and there was no inducement to an individual peasant to use better methods. Thus for one bushel of grain sown, only four or five bushels were cropped.

The inhabitants of the village were; (i) peasants and workers on land who were freemen and serfs or villeins; (ii) artisans, like carpenters, shoemakers, smiths, weavers, spinners, bakers, etc; (iii) servants of the lord of the manor—seneschal, steward, bailiff or intendant, and other ministerials in accordance with the status of the lord; (iv) members of the lord's family and his squires; and (v) the clergy. The first three belonged to the non-noble class and the last two to the aristocracy.

The peculiar relations of these two classes gave its special character to the feudal society. These relations affected all aspects of their lives—economic, social and political—and were determined by the peculiar methods of production which continued till they were displaced by the growth of capitalism. In the tenth and the eleventh centuries, the rural population comprised mainly serfs or villeins; later freemen grew in numbers and ultimately serfdom was abolished. Each family of serfs received from the village lord a house and an allotment of land distributed over the open fields in strips. Besides, they shared the use of the meadow, the common pasture, the wood and forest, and the river for fishing. The holding which originally

was based on a life contract soon became hereditary. But the terms on which it was held were very oppressive. In the first place, the status of the serf was just slightly better than that of a slave. He could not be bought and sold like a slave, but he could not leave his lord, as he was bound to the soil. If he attempted to escape, feudal custom gave to the lord the right of pursuit, capture and fine. Nor could he sell or alienate his land without permission. The relation between the producer and the landowner was based on compulsion derived from law and custom.

The obligations of the serf may be grouped under three heads—predial service, extra service and payments in money and kind for the use of the land. Under the first head the most characteristic was 'week work'. He was obliged to supply one man to work ordinarily for three days in the week on the lord's demesne, and also to place at his service his plough and oxen for cultivation, and horse and cart for carriage.

Among his extra services, known as 'boon work', were reaping, garnering and transporting the crop to the lord's manor at the time of the harvest. He had to work on hedges, dykes, canals, ditches, roads, bridges, buildings and ponds; and he had to tend and shear sheep.

Payment in kind consisted of farm products. The cultivator had to give annually a share of corn, oats, hay, poultry, eggs, fish, ale, honey and wax. Also he paid a charge in money or kind on heads of cattle—oxen, sheep, swine and goats.

There were numerous obligations and dues to be discharged in cash. In the first category were taxes restraining personal liberty—capitation tax or poll-tax levied per head and paid annually, marriage tax (*merchet*) for permission to marry a daughter, education tax for consent to send the son to school. The lord had the right to take possession of the serf's lands on his death without children, and to realise a succession tax known as 'heriot', which meant the offer of the best animal in his possession. He was also liable to tallage or taille, a tax levied on the family of the tenant.

In the second category were the dues connected with the holding of land. Cens was one, and it consisted of a cash rent fixed by custom; in case of its non-payment the holding was resumed. Relief was another, and it implied the payment of a year's rent on the death of the tenant by his successor for redeeming the land. Tithe was the third.

It was calculated at one-tenth of the product of the farm, and was payable to the Church. In addition to these three, there were a number of other dues too, e.g., a fee for permission to sell a holding; tolls for the use of roads, bridges, ports and passes; duties on the sale of corn, salt, viand and merchandise; and license fees for stalls, markets and fairs.

In addition to the payments in cash or kind were the lord's banalities—the obligation to grind corn at his mill, to bake bread in his oven, to press grape or olives in his press, to tan leather at his tannery, etc. Besides there were taxes on cutting wood from the forest for fuel or building, on pasturing cattle in the meadows and on fishing in the rivers.

Notwithstanding all these burdens, the fundamental characteristic of the tenure of the serf was its insecurity, for he had no remedy against the discretion of the lord. Against his neighbours he had recourse to the court of the manor, which was presided over by the lord, but against his lord he had no redress from the state courts. His only protection was the feudal custom which had assumed the status of law, and the practical needs of the lord whose agricultural profits and demesne work depended upon the willing service of the serf.

But the tale of the woes of the serfs did not end here. They were required to entertain the lord who did not ordinarily reside in the village but visited it from time to time. The lord and his retinue of escorts, servants, horses, dogs, falcons, etc., had to be given a feast. Then on extraordinary occasions—for example when a house was built—stones had to be supplied, and beasts of burden and carts to be provided. Again in time of war the peasants had to mount guard at the lord's mansion, construct fortifications, dig trenches, make palisades and follow the lord in his expeditions.

Serfs and freemen constituted the labouring and producing class of the village. The position of the freemen was better than that of the serfs. They lived in better houses, which consisted of a number of rooms round a courtyard and a garden. Their share of land in the village like that of the serfs was scattered in strips, and it had to be cultivated in the customary ways. But the terms of the tenure were different. The freemen held the land as farmers or metayers in perpetuity and on a fixed rent which could not be enhanced. They could not be evicted. They could freely dispose of their holding, devise it at will or alienate or partition it. The only condition was

that the dues of the lord, viz. the fixed rent and the agreed services, should continue to be paid.

The free tenants were not burdened with many of the duties of the serfs. They could leave the village if they chose. They did not require the permission of the lord to marry their children. They were not liable to pay the fee given at death, nor the fee for residence outside the village, nor the poll-tax. But, although the freemen held their tenements based on agreements which laid down what rents had to be paid and what services had to be rendered, and they could in contrast with the serfs appeal to the court of the king if dissatisfied with the decisions of the lord, in all agricultural activities they were on an equal footing with the serfs. They were members of the village community and were bound by its decisions. They were not free in the management of their plots, for they had to follow the communal practices regarding the rotation of crops, the use of the commons and the setting up of hedges. They were also required to render light services at the harvest.

The lands reserved for the lord of the manor known as his demesne were cultivated for the sole benefit of the proprietor. They were distributed like the lots of villeins and freemen. They did not form a compact property, but lay scattered among other strips in the open fields. The work of cultivating them was done partly by labourers paid in kind and partly by the serfs, who were bound by law and custom to render week work regularly and boon work at certain times of the season. In this way ploughing, sowing, harrowing, harvesting and storing were accomplished. The produce which belonged to the lord was carried to the market, his land and buildings were kept in good order, and his interests were well looked after.

Not all the lords resided on the manor and those who did, took little part in village activities. The lord entrusted his authority to a body of officials who formed an important element in the population of the manor. They were seneschal or steward, bailiff, reeve, and other servants. The seneschal, who was in charge of a number of manors, had the general supervision of affairs, and was the custodian of the customs and laws. He safeguarded the rights of his master, visited the manors and supervised the demesne lands. He also kept a watch over the accounts of the rents and services and over the general interests of the lord. He had control over the bailiffs and other servants and ministerials.

The bailiff was directly responsible for the management of the manor. He made daily rounds of the fields and pastures to see that there was nothing remiss in cultivation and every one performed the task entrusted to him. He marketed the surplus produce of the demesne lands.

The reeve was chosen by the village community and was an intermediary between the lord and the tenants. He was a serf himself and his main concern was with the tenants. He was below the bailiff in status and functions. He was responsible for collecting rents and keeping accounts of receipts and expenses. The reeve was given lands on which rents were remitted in part or whole.

In addition, there were a number of servants who performed various functions. They were taken from the inhabitants of the village and their services were rewarded in different ways.

Among them were beadles and radmen to carry summons and orders, auditors for accounts and for hearing complaints, wardens of woods, ploughmen, waggoners, cowherds, swineherds, shepherds and dairymaids. Also there were the table steward, cellarman, constable for stables, chamberlain for clothes and provisions, master of kitchen, huntsman, forester and others. The lord's household required the services of artisans—tailor, armourer, baker, etc. At the head of each occupation there was a ministerial.

Altogether the ministerials formed a class between freemen and serfs. They suffered from certain disabilities like the serfs, but they enjoyed allotments of land and were attached to the person of the lord.

The two aims of manorial economy, namely, the provision of the means of existence for the village people and the securing of profits to the lord, were realised by the dual machinery of the manor—the village community and the lord's demesne officials. The village community consisted of the group of tenants, free and unfree, who had shares in the land, and who exercised an effective voice in the affairs of the village.

Each tenant had his fixed allotment of land which consisted of a number of strips. The land passed from father to son, but the cultivating rights over it came into operation only when ploughing started and ceased as soon as the crop was gathered. In the interval the plot was at the disposal of the community. The methods of cultivation and the agricultural processes were determined by the village as a whole. Legally, waste land, pastures and meadows were the

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property of the lord, but in actual practice the community claimed their disposal and framed rules for their use by the villagers based upon the size of the share of each tenant. The use of forests for timber, of hedges for fuel, and of turf was also regulated by rules.

The lord's demesne had, however, intimate relations with the village. Its profits were derived (i) from the portion of the land rented out to the tenants, and (ii) from the cultivation of the remainder with the forced labour of serfs. The remuneration of the servants was partly met from the rent paid by the tenants.

The dual economy of the village was reflected in the concept of ownership of property. According to Roman ideas, property is characterised by an uncompromising unity; its possession excludes the right of all others. But in the feudal society of medieval Europe, the Roman idea was transformed. Ownership or *dominium* became bifurcated. The same plot of land acknowledged the proprietary rights of several parties. There was firstly the superior and direct right of ownership known as eminent domain, and in the second place, the inferior right of exploitation and use of produce called useful domain. Thus neither the lord nor the tenant could claim absolute property in land. Land belonged in feudal theory to the king, who allotted it amongst his tenants-in-chief, who in their turn distributed it to barons and fief-holders, from whom freemen and villeins held their fields.

But whatever the nature of the legal rights of property, in the economic life of the village the lord was a parasite. He performed no economic function, yet he received all the rewards. The cultivators laboured on their own plots to eke out a living, but the greater part of their time and energy was conscripted for service on the lands of the lord.

The nobility and military organisation

On its economic side, the feudal system was an organisation for production which comprised the labouring class cultivating land, paying rent and rendering predial service to the lords owning land and exercising control. It was at the same time a military organisation, a hierarchical order of vassals holding land from the feudal lords and rendering military service.

The two—the peasants who laboured on land and the vassals who defended the village—were joined in the manor. Both were admitted to their functions and tenures in the same way by means of

a contract. Both had to observe the ceremonial of homage (acknowledgement of service), and both had to take the oaths of fealty and obedience. Both were invested solemnly with the grant of land and the transfer was symbolised by the delivery of a flag or staff or charter. Only in the case of the peasant the superior partner in the transaction, namely the lord, was represented by the steward, and his tenure was called socage or villeinage. But the warrior received his tenure of land called fief or *feudum* directly from the lord. The ceremony in the case of the base tenant was simple and in that of the noble tenant elaborate.

Like the tenancy of the peasant, the fief involved various duties and dues on the part of the vassal. Both started with acts of homage and fealty, and had to pay relief on the succession to the holding or fief by the heir. Here, however, the resemblance between the two ended, for the negative and positive obligations of the vassal differed from those of the peasant. In swearing fidelity the vassal promised not to wrong the lord, not to attack his person, property, honour or family. But the undertakings were mutual. The lord and his vassals—knights and squires—lived together, ate together and went on expeditions together, and ties of affection and regard bound them together.

The feudal obligations of the vassal were expressed by the terms aid and counsel. Aid included military service. The vassal was bound to accompany the lord in his wars and expeditions into neighbouring lands for at least forty days in the year. He guarded his body in battle and garrisoned the fortifications. He was expected to attend on the lord and render personal service. There were also aids in cash and kind—presents at investment, reliefs on the change of the lord, fees for permission to sell the fief. Extraordinary occasions called for extra aids—to meet the expenses of crusades, to pay ransom for the release of the lord, and to contribute for the celebration of his daughter's marriage and the knighting of his son.

The other category of duties was rendering counsel. It involved attendance at the courts of the lord and at the special meetings of the vassals convened to consider war and peace and changes in the customary rules. It also involved serving on tribunals to adjudicate on the disputes of vassals.

The hierarchy of feudal nobility was divided into several classes. In the highest rank were nobles who bore titles of dignity—king, duke or earl, marquis, count. They were owners of many manors and

they brought into battle large numbers of horsemen. In the second rank were noblemen without official titles. They would possess a number of villages and each would command a troop of horsemen. They were generally known as barons, seigneurs or lords. Next to them were the knights. A knight was the possessor of a single domain—a village or a portion of a village. He was in the service of the lord from whom he held his domain. The lowest in rank were the squires. They began as valets of knights, but later became owners of land and members of the noble class. Position in the hierarchy was determined by the size of the landed estate and the number of fighting men that could be maintained.

The clergy and the Church

Besides the warriors and labourers, there was a third class in feudal society, namely, the clergy—regular and secular.

In the Middle Ages the conditions of life were exceedingly hard, and the general standards of living extremely low. Production of wealth was at its minimum, because the level of agricultural technique was primitive. "As the peasant trod the soil his toes peered out of his worn shoes, his hose hung about his hocks on all sides", while his wife "went barefoot on the ice so that the blood flowed."[1] They were mercilessly exploited, and the bond servants were "being bought and sold like beasts, and beat with rods, and scarcely suffered to rest or to take breath."[2] The bailiffs of the lord frequently earned the not unenvied title of *excoriator rusticorum* (flayer of the countryman's skin). Unending war and violence, bloodshed and rapine were the normal feature of the times. The main occupation of the lords was war, hunts and tournaments.

Of the three classes of society, the cultivator had no means and the fighter no will for the refinements and graces of life. The task of providing for the moral and religious requirements of the people, therefore, fell upon the clergy. They ministered to religious and intellectual needs, and because of their piety and learning enjoyed great prestige.

The organisation of the clergy or the Church constituted an ecclesiastical hierarchy of which the Pope was the head. This

[1] Bennett, H. S., *Life on the English Manor* (1150-1400), pp. 164, 185-186, quoted by Maurice Dobb, *Studies in the Development of Capitalism*, p. 44

[2] Coulton, C. G., *Social Life in Britain from the Conquest to the Reformation*, pp. 340, 341-2, quoted by Maurice Dobb, *ibid.* p. 44

organisation, built up of the higher clergy, included bishops, presbyters or priests and deacons. The bishop "was in charge of a diocese which in early times corresponded with the territory ruled by a provincial governor." He was responsible for doctrine, discipline and administration in his diocese. He received revenues from endowments and disposed them. He made arrangements for the training of priests and for their subsistence.

In the beginning the bishops were subsidised by the state and were regarded as its ministers for religious work. As the feudal regime developed they were assimilated to royal officers. They received grants of land which involved administrative duties. These estates were devoted partly to ecclesiastical purposes and partly to military service to the crown. The terms of their endowments were similar to the conditions of grants to the nobility. In consequence, although in theory they were elected, in practice they were chosen from the court from among the nobility.

Presbyters and deacons were the associates of bishops. The first helped in the performance of religious rites and the second in administration.

The lower clergy were ministers of local parish churches in townships, vills and manors. They owed their appointments to the founders of the churches--mostly lords of estates, who endowed them with lands. Naturally parsons and priests were dependants of their benefactors, and the bishops held no control over them. Thus the glebe of the Church bound its ministrants by feudal ties to the lay lords.

The monastic houses and establishments again sprang up as a result of the activity and bounty of laymen. Here men disgusted with their worldly surroundings took refuge, practised asceticism and led a life devoted to religious exercises. The monasteries rendered great services to society. They spread the light of faith in the countryside, taught people liturgies, devotional exercises, and pious ways of living. They gave expression to the corporate religious ideals and needs of the country. The members of the monastic orders were usually men belonging to the noble class.

Although in the beginning the three groups were more or less independent, gradually they became united into one organisation of the universal Church which had its centre at Rome. This organisation was not part of the feudal system, but it was interlinked with it.

The Church played an important part in the life of the Middle Ages. So far as the individual was concerned the Church set for him his moral standards, prescribed his beliefs which enveloped his life in an atmosphere of religion. The important stages which mark man's life from birth to death were occasions for sacraments administered by priests. Daily routine was conducted under their watchful eyes, through the system of confessions and penances.

The classification of men as clergy and laity stemmed from the rights of the Church to confer holy orders. The Church exercised restraint and provided opportunities for the pursuit of peaceful avocations. It declared Sundays, festival days and the last days of the week as days of God's peace or God's truce, and thus tried to prevent continuous strife. The clergy were the conscience-keepers of the rude warriors who feared nought besides the wrath of God and the last Judgement. By their exhortations to better life and their threats to close the doors of eternal felicity on those who disobeyed, they strongly supported the cause of law and order. Thus they acquired influence in politics and in economic affairs. The prelates ranked with the highest nobility. The bishops and the abbots had their vassals and their troops of retainers who were bound to them by feudal ties. They intervened in state affairs; some of them participated in wars; many served as counsellors and administrators. The Church also attempted to regulate economic affairs. It prescribed the just price of commodities and prohibited usury.

By its origin and nature the feudal system implied a decentralisation of authority, a fragmentation of sovereignty. Beaumanoir, a medieval jurist and an authority on feudal laws and customs, held that "every baron is a sovereign in his barony." Every vassal exercised the right of private war. The king had no right to proclaim his decrees in the territory of a baron without the latter's consent. All legislation including the levy of taxes had to be enacted through an assize or establishment and considered in the court of the superior lord with the consent of the vassals.

The dispensation of justice was also decentralised. Only criminal matters in which the penalty was loss of head and hand were brought before royal courts; minor cases were decided in the court of the local lord. The manor and the village community functioned as the local centres of justice. The manorial courts were composed of all tenants—freemen as well as serfs. They exercised jurisdiction not only in

minor criminal cases, but also in civil pleas arising out of land tenures and also concerning the person of the vassal—whether free or unfree. Only where villeins were involved, the decisions of the manorial court were final, but where freemen were concerned, the lord might override a decision in tenurial matters and the verdict in criminal cases could be revised in a royal court.

The feudal economy was a closed system. Its basis was agriculture of the primitive type. The produce of cultivation was modest and therefore the surplus scanty. It just fulfilled the needs of subsistence. It was consumed by the village people, and what remained was handed over to the manorial chief and his household. Apart from food crops the village produced flax, wool and leather. It had to import salt, iron, spices, cloth and metalware in exchange for its grain, flax, wool and leather. The market was restricted in commodities and limited in extent.

The natural economy of the village had little use for money or capital. For division of labour or specialisation there was slight scope. Mobility, both vertical and horizontal, was precluded by the feudal system The two classes—nobles and peasants—were separated by an almost unbridgeable gulf. Status was largely based on birth and wealth. Between the economic man who laboured and produced and the political man who fought and governed there was the relation of servant and master, and therefore there was little scope for community of life and understanding.

Politically the units of feudal hierarchy were loosely linked together. Each unit was economically self-sufficient and autonomous in its administration—police and judiciary. The king and the authority of the central government bore lightly upon the vassals and villages, for the intermediary feudal barons constituted a state within the state. However, England was an exception; here the Norman rulers had maintained direct control over the tenants of the feudal nobility. In the rest of Europe the rulers could not issue direct orders to the subjects living on the manors of the lords.

It will be no exaggeration to say that in the Middle Ages European countries were conglomerations of sovereign village monarchies, and that the activity of the village was ancillary to the military purposes and political aims of its lord. But each little village monarchy was well organised and so long as it lasted, it functioned as an efficient machine. Its customs and regulations were minute and

comprehensive and they were honoured and observed without much cavil. Their breaches were punished through regular courts. Its organs for legislation, the assembly of the village community or the lord's court, consisting of vassals and freemen, acted without many hitches. Its organs of execution, the stewards and bailiffs and others, performed their duties faithfully. Its judiciary dealt out justice, both criminal (in minor cases) and civil, according to the recognised customs and laws without being unduly biased by personal considerations.

In the matter of religion both the individual and society were deeply under the influence of the Church. But it was exercised under important limits. The Christian scriptures which formed the basis of the dogma and doctrine of the Church were largely books of edification, concerned more with the inner life of man than with his external behaviour, concerned more with attitudes of mind and spiritual grace than with the details of conduct. They did not lay down any rules for marriage and inheritance, classification of property and status. The rules and regulations which the canon law prescribed were based upon the authority of the Church, but this could be challenged and an appeal made to the divine injunctions embodied in the scrip tures

The dominant feature of the feudal regime was its particularism, but it was tempered by a concession to universalism. The roots of this universalism lay in the culture of the Middle Ages. The idea of the universal Roman Empire still lingered and inspired ambitious princes to revive the ancient traditions. The common faith of all Europeans beckoned towards a social and political community of Christians. The unity of Western Christendom under the Church of Rome offered an example. Common dogmas and doctrines, common rites and ceremonies and a common discipline and organisation were powerful stimuli towards unity. They were reinforced by an educational system common to all the peoples of Europe, with one language—Latin—one curriculum of studies and international schools and universities. Again economic conditions were similar and national particularism absent.

The hierarchic order of feudalism which guaranteed autonomy at different stages lent itself admirably to the conception of universalism. On the secular side the autonomous manors and seignieuries owed allegiance to greater lords—counts, earls and dukes— from

whom they held their fiefs; the greater lords in their turn were tenants-in-chief and liegemen of kings. The kingdoms were supposed to be feudatories of the Holy Roman Empire, which Charlemagne had revived in A.D. 800, and which was reconstructed by German kings. It pretended to universal sovereignty, but its writ never ran beyond the boundaries of Germany and Italy.

On the clerical side the ecclesiastical hierarchy recognised the Pope as its chief. Next came the order of the cardinals, bishops and the higher clergy, and then the lower clergy. Relations between them followed the order of the lay hierarchy.

The feudal system postulated two supreme heads—one for the lay government and the other for the religious order. Who should have precedence between the two was a matter of prolonged dispute. In the thirteenth century the Pope was looked upon as the paramount authority. But soon the position changed and the kings refused to acknowledge such supremacy.

Town life

Feudal society was mainly rural, but within the society and as an integral part of it an interesting development was taking place, namely, the growth of urbanisation. As ultimately this growth was responsible for destroying the feudal system, for transforming feudal society and paving the way for the emergence of national societies, and as similar developments did not occur in India till the beginning of the nineteenth century, it is of interest to understand the causes of its growth and the processes which brought about the great change in European societies.

The barbarian invasions which extinguished the Roman Empire were responsible for the destruction of the Roman cities and the reversion of Europe to a primitive tribal ruralism. But when the flood of emigration and spoliation subsided and the emigrants settled down, new forces began to rebuild town life on new foundations. In the beginning there was hardly any difference between a manor and a town, as both trade and industry were subordinate to agriculture and the village was self-sufficient, the village artisan producing the few simple commodities it needed.

But new needs appeared which affected this self-sufficiency. The Danish invasions in England and the incursions of the Northmen in the northern countries of Europe compelled people to take shelter

within fortresses and castles surrounded by high walls and water-filled moats. Thus war and violence were one factor in that concentration of peoples which led to the appearance of towns. The second cause was the foundation of Christian monasteries. They became centres of arts and crafts, because of the peace and stability which they offered. Then, some places acquired prominence and attracted people because they were the seats of great fief-holders—both lay and ecclesiastical. Again geographical position—situation at a ford, on a cross-road, on the bank of a river or on the sea coast—secured advantages favourable to the growth of trade and business.

The life of the towns lay in their industry and commerce. Their revival and progress proved to be the most explosive factor in the history of medieval society. In the eleventh century the awakening started with trade. The Norman conquest of England and of Sicily, the rise of the Christian power in Portugal and Christian victories over the Moors in Spain, released the spirit of travel and adventure, which had beneficial effects upon commerce. England, France, Spain and the Mediterranean were linked together, and merchants with their merchandise of cloth, silk and wool, metalware and arms, Barbary horses, oranges, citrons and wines, began to move about these lands.

Then came the Crusades. They brought the rude and backward natives of Europe into contact with the higher civilisation of the East. These wars of religion also gave an impetus to trade. The merchants of Venice, Genoa, Pisa, Barcelona and Marseilles purchased luxuries of the Orient at the ports of the Levant brought thither by caravans from Damascus and Baghdad and from Egypt, Iran, India and China, and distributed them over all the countries of Europe. Fairs were held and markets grew along the routes of trade and wherever peace and security were guaranteed by the arms of an enlightened feudal lord or the sanctity of a shrine.

The stimulus of trade stirred into activity traffic between village and town. In the early days village industry was merely an adjunct of village agriculture. In the manor the villager built his house, spun his yarn, wove his cloth, made his shoes, prepared his tools, plough and furniture. On the larger domains of kings, chief nobles and church dignitaries production was somewhat more elaborate and involved greater division of labour and specialisation. But after the eleventh century circumstances changed. The peasants began to

enjoy surpluses of production, the revival of trade brought money into the towns, and exchanges between the surplus agricultural produce of the village and the products of the craftsmen of towns grew.

In the urban areas far-reaching changes occurred as trade and industry developed. In the early medieval times many of the towns were entrenched camps or fortified enclosures. The English boroughs and the Continental bourgs were established to meet the needs of the protection and defence of the agricultural population from the pillaging raids of the Vikings. In time they attracted traders and artisans who settled outside the walls, and established centres of business and of residence. Here the merchants congregated. They increased in numbers and prospered. They built walls for protection, constructed churches for worship and organised their necessary institutions.

When trade revived in the eleventh century, two streams flowed across Europe—one from the Scandinavian countries in the north towards Constantinople, and the other between the Mediterranean lands and western Europe. The Italian cities were the first to profit from this commercial revival. They became rich and thriving centres of economic life. Cities with a population of a hundred thousand souls, rivalling Constantinople, sprang up. In them capital accumulated, arts and crafts multiplied and specialisation made rapid strides. They made advances in the methods of business organisation and techniques of trade. Italian merchants frequented the fairs and Italian bankers financed the princes of Europe.

Thus the influence of Italian town economy spread to the north. Italian financiers, from the humble usurers of Asti to the great banking houses of Lombardy, carried on their business all over Europe, and Italian capital invigorated the movement of urbanisation in the north. England, with a population of hardly a million and a half in 1370, had over a hundred chartered towns. Specialisation, too, was so advanced that in Paris alone there were more than one hundred and fifty different crafts.

It is true that the northern towns were at first less populous and poorer than the southern towns. For instance, London, in the thirteenth century, had less than 25,000 inhabitants. Nor was the difference between a village and a town very marked. Both were parts of the feudal organisation and suffered from similar burdens and encumbrances. To both prosperity and increasing circulation of money brought release from the shackles of feudal bonds. The

villages became homes of freemen who held their lands under tenures which did not force them to obligatory services or bind them to the soil. Status yielded place to contract.

In the towns the merchants accumulated capital and their zest for profit increased. They invested their capital in money-lending, banking and other financial operations, in extending commerce, especially exports, in land and in industry.

But the most important result of commercial development was the rise of the freedom movement in the towns. In England the boroughs and on the Continent the communes emancipated themselves from the yoke of the feudal lords—both lay and ecclesiastical. They gained their liberties sometimes by means of struggle and insurrection—largely in the estates of the Church—and at other times by the goodwill and cooperation of their royal or baronial masters, or by taking advantage of their difficulties.

Originally the towns in which the merchants lived were feudal in their organisation and military in their objects. Their laws and customs were authoritarian, their administration seigniorial. They imposed restrictions on personal liberty and property and their system of feudal levies was oppressive and obstructive of trade. Nor was the administration of justice suited to the needs of a mercantile community. The merchants on the Continent under the exigencies of their business formed gilds and fraternities in order to get rid of their feudal burdens. They joined together and solemnly swore to maintain their freedom against all attacks. The communes were thus ushered into life.

The autonomy of the commune implied the establishment of a corporate body which had its own privileged territorial laws, different from the common laws of the country, its own courts for the administration of these laws, its own instruments of authority and government, and its own constitution. Each commune was in essence a municipal republic.

The history of the English municipalities was less uproarious than that of the Continental countries. Nevertheless its results were similar. The kings of England had, since the Norman conquest, endeavoured to place limits upon the authority of feudal barons, and they willingly acceded to the demands of their boroughs situated on their demesne estates to grant them charters of liberties. The towns on the baronial estates, too, did not experience much difficulty

in obtaining similar privileges. Only towns connected with bishoprics and monastic houses met with determined and tenacious resistance and had to wage a prolonged and bitter struggle to wrest concessions.

By and large, the English towns did obtain immunity from the authority of both their immediate lords as well as the local representatives of the crown in the country, namely, the sheriffs. The charters conferred upon them a number of privileges. For example, the right to collect the revenue of the borough without the intervention of baronial and royal officers, provided a fixed composition was paid to the exchequer; the immunity from the jurisdiction of external courts for the dispensation of justice; the right of electing their magistrates, of conducting their administration, and of establishing their gilds of merchants and artisans.

The rapid growth of the towns had a profound effect upon society. The early economy of Europe was based upon the village. In later Middle Ages town economy dominated social life. Then the village was an almost independent unit of the political system; now the town asserting its immunities and exercising its autonomy became an almost sovereign republic, endowed with the organs of a national polity and jealous in guarding its interests in inter-municipal relations. While feudal anarchy was receding from the rural areas, the towns had come to occupy the position of feudal fiefs. In some parts of Europe, for instance, Italy, they became as powerful as to be able to break up the unity of the country. In other countries the central authority maintained its municipal vassals under varying degrees of control.

The internal social system of the towns was very different from that of the feudal manors. The economy of the town depended upon the associations of merchants known as the merchant gilds. The monopoly of the trade of the town vested in the gild, and its rights were guaranteed by charter. The gild promoted cooperation and collective bargaining, and performed the functions of a welfare society. Among its purely economic functions was the control and regulation of industry and trade: it framed ordinances or assizes to fix the prices, to prescribe uniform weights and measures and to regulate the markets.

But the activities of the merchant gilds were not confined to economic affairs. In the beginning they participated as members

of the whole citizen body in the exercise of political rights. Ultimately they became a privileged community which monopolised all political power. They deprived the commoners, plebeians and workers of their share in the administration. This privileged order constituted the bourgeoisie, the middle class—the class intermediate between the peasants and the nobility. They exercised authority in the borough through the meeting of the general assembly of the gild or the bourgeoisie, whose main function was to elect the public officials or magistrates. These officials constituted the real government. In the English boroughs they were known as 'mayors' or 'aldermen' or 'bailiffs', or in France as 'counsellors', 'jurors', or 'syndics'. They made ordinances to regulate industry, administered municipal finances, commanded the militia and took the necessary measures for defence. Above all, they dispensed justice among the citizens, adjudicating both in civil and criminal cases.

The two main problems of the town administrators were the provision of food and of defence. Both involved expenditure which required the development of a financial system capable of meeting the heavy charges. The solution was found in the levy of municipal taxes—either a direct tax on the property of burghers, or an indirect tax on the merchandise entering the town. The import of food and its sale price to the consumer were controlled by regulating the market. Defence was cared for by building walls and moats and purchasing arms.

The growth of trade had led to the growth of the merchant gild; the development of industry prompted the foundations of associations of skilled workers called craft-gilds. Their establishment was "undoubtedly the most interesting and most original creation of bourgeois civilization in the Middle Ages." They had a profound influence upon medieval economy.

The craft-gild was composed of three classes of members—the masters, the journeymen and the apprentices. For each craft there was a separate gild and no one who desired to follow a particular craft could do so without becoming a member of the gild. An aspirant to a craft joined the gild as an apprentice, and it was not possible for anyone to become a master without first serving as an apprentice. The admission of an apprentice was regarded a public and solemn contract which imposed reciprocal obligations on the two parties. Apprenticeship was rigidly restricted with an eye upon the future

number of masters, as also on the ground that a craft was the exclusive monopoly of those who practised it. The restrictions, however, did not harden into caste, because with the exception of the master's sons, where heredity counted, the admission was open to all classes.

The term of apprenticeship was usually long—from three to twelve years. It was the duty of the master to provide board and lodging, training in the technical processes, and whatever else was necessary, for the training of the apprentices. The master was responsible for the general behaviour and good and efficient workmanship of the apprentice. He was authorised to chastise him for wrongful conduct. The apprentice was bound to render obedience and to remain faithful to the master. He was required to perform servile duties in the house, and sometimes to pay a premium.

On the completion of the term of training the apprentice became a journeyman, a worker for wages or a valet. A journeyman was free to travel about and join the workshop of another master and in another town. In the period of probation which lasted from one to three years he received wages for his work from the master. But his labouring day was long, from sunrise to sunset.

The apprentice or journeyman entered into the charmed circle of the masters as the result of an examination or by submitting a masterpiece as practical testimony of skill and knowledge. His earnings during the period of probation gave him an opportunity to amass sufficient capital to set up his independent atelier. The aspirant to mastership was installed at a solemn ceremony. The statutes and regulations of the society were read out to him and he took the oath to observe them.

Between the three classes of artisans in the gild there existed a real spirit of comradeship. Masters and journeymen went under the same training and discipline as the apprentices. They worked together in their small workshops. They shared in common the amenities of life and were bound to stand together in their good and evil fortune. The gild safeguarded the economic interests of its members. It regulated periods of work, assessed wages and fixed the prices of products. It catered for religious interests too. It made arrangements for worship and celebrated religious pageants. It helped its poor members and those who happened to be in trouble. The gild acted as a court of arbitration in all disputes and prevented recourse to law courts.

The government of the gild was in the hands of its members. The gild had its assembly which met at regular intervals and framed ordinances to regulate its activities. Some gilds had a council, too, for judging defaults and making regulations. The executive authority was vested in the wardens, ordinarily elected by the assembly. They supervised the work of the members and ensured proper standards of quality. They enforced ordinances and regulations.

The craft-gilds had originally to build up their position in the face of opposition from the merchants who constituted the municipal authority. But subsequently they were recognised as public bodies, were endowed with limited authority and regarded as a subordinate department of the city administration. The importance of the gilds grew as their relations with the municipal authority became closer. Eventually membership of the craft-gild became the chief avenue to citizenship and appointments to municipal office, for example, the mayoralty, became their apanage. The craft-gild displaced the gild of merchants.

The feudal system attempted the reconciliation of the particular and the universal. But its socio-economic basis was strongly particularistic and deeply entrenched in the locality. It afforded little scope for universalism in social and political relations. Its units possessed an internal coherence and stability which admitted of only the loosest and weakest ties with the larger wholes.

Though the collective life of the early Middle Ages centred round the isolated, atomic, autonomous village, its aspirations soared towards the realisation of the unity of entire Christendom. These aspirations expressed themselves through all aspects of social life. They gave rise to the concepts of a universal society which transcended climatic, racial and geographical differences, of a universal monarchy which claimed to be the apex of the political order, of a universal Church which guided the conduct of the people in consonance with its ideas of a divine will, of a universal law based upon Roman jurisprudence, of a universal code of chivalry, of a universal language, namely, Latin. They also manifested themselves in art and literature, in philosophy and religion.

Decline of feudalism

Between the ideas of a narrow though intense particularism and a broad but superficial universalism there was no room for the

intermediate concept of a national society and a national State. Its emergence had to await the complete dissolution of the feudal regime, in both its aspects—particular and universal.

The dissolving process began soon after feudalism had attained its highest development in the thirteenth century. The factors which were responsible for the transformation of the medieval feudal system were many: among them the vicissitudes of population and money were the more important.

The population of Europe had been growing from the eleventh to the thirteenth century. Then it ceased to expand and actually declined because of the ravages of frequent wars, plague and pestilence in the fourteenth century. This disturbed the balance between the supply of farm labour and the agricultural requirements of the villages. Much arable land especially in the demesne of the lords went out of cultivation, wages increased, the forced service of the serfs became irksome and inefficient and the relations between the lords and tenants deteriorated.

The influx of money gave an impetus to these tendencies. The lords found it more profitable to free their tenants from feudal services, to rent out their lands to lease-holders or to employ labour on payment of money wages for cultivating the lands. The villeins freed from work on the fields of the lord obtained the opportunity to devote their time and energy to their own farms. This enabled them to produce a surplus for marketing and to acquire money for purchasing commodities needed from the town.

The position of the peasants improved after the thirteenth century as a result of momentary fluctuations, and the reappearance of gold coins. Prices rose and the landlords who had converted their rents into cash were severely hit. But the peasants gained. The loss of revenue and increase of expenditure increased the indebtedness of the lords, and forced them to sell their lands which were bought in many cases by merchants of the towns.

The consequences were revolutionary. In the villages serfdom was replaced by a free peasantry and a free labour class without attachment to land grew up. The village craftsman was compelled to abandon his craft, for the villagers began to depend for their requirements upon the town artisans who possessed higher skill and better technique. Rural society which was based upon service tenure and fixed status gave place to a society founded upon free

contract. The semi-bondsmen became free individuals. Cash nexus replaced customary rights and duties. The landowning class turned to other avenues for earning money. The growth of commerce in the towns offered one such avenue. Another was created by the growth of employment in the civil and military departments of the state. Those who remained on land began to consolidate their plots and to enclose them for producing marketable crops and for sheep rearing. In this way the entire medieval economy of the feudal village system was changed.

The medieval towns underwent a transformation too. The typical method of town industry was handicraft production with little differentiation of function. In the beginning the merchant gilds exercised general control over industry, but the abuse of power, mismanagement of finances and partisan administration of justice weakened and ruined them. The craft-gilds took their place, established monopolies and exclusive systems, and obtained control over municipal governments.

But in the sixteenth century the craft-gilds too declined. The most significant development was that the rich craftsmen became merchants and employers or factors who put out the production of goods to workers outside town limits where the regulations of the gilds did not apply. Thus the factors or merchant entrepreneurs were separated from the class of hired artisans. The entrepreneur class organised livery companies in order to control the craftsmen. The management by which the artisans became hired workers receiving wages for their labour and the merchants capitalist employers is known as the system of "domestic economy". The appearance of the companies led to the break-down of urban localism. The monopoly of craft-gilds was undermined and capital was emancipated from the shackles of restrictive monopolism.

These developments ended the isolation in which the feudal manor and town had functioned. The town and country became partners in business enterprise and were linked together in a common social organisation. Self-sufficiency disappeared and influences began to pass from the one to the other, stimulating interdependence.

Rise of the State

While the transformation of feudal economy was laying the foundations of a new society whose units—the villages and towns—

were merging into a larger social organism, the process was accelerated and strengthened by the rise of centralised authority, by the accumulation of power in the hands of the monarchs. The concentration took place all along the line, but principally in the spheres of general administration, dispensation of justice, and military organisation.

Feudalism in its political aspects was anarchic. The power of the State was limited. The feudal lords and the Church claimed large sectors of authority, and the king exercised little direct control over most of his subjects. Only in the case of England the Norman conquerors had imposed directly their will upon all the conquered people. In such a society there was little room for legislative activity as custom was all-pervading. Justice was largely private, for most of the courts were communal, feudal or ecclesiastical and the jurisdiction of the king's courts was strictly limited. The machinery of central administration was primitive, the officers of the king were ministrants of his household. The army consisted of feudal levies, which were gathered under the banner of feudal chiefs, who were bound to render military service in accordance with feudal custom. The usual period was forty days in the year and there was no obligation to serve outside the realm.

In these wild times when the arts of war were little developed a baron in his castle could easily defy the monarch, for sieges were expensive in terms both of time and money. Thus between kings desirous of extending their authority and the great barons jealous of preserving their powers there was natural antipathy, and even solemn oaths of homage and fealty buttressed by the sanctions of religion did not prevent frequent insurrections and rebellions.

The struggle for supremacy between them continued for hundreds of years. There were vicissitudes of fortune. Sometimes the king gained and then he lost ground, but ultimately by the end of the fifteenth century, the scales definitely turned in favour of the central authority.

In this contest both the town and the country were involved. The towns supported the central power, for their interests demanded the maintenance of peace and order which was perpetually threatened by the turbulence of the barons. They also provided the sinews of power in two ways—through customs and taxes and through loans. The money thus obtained released the kings from

dependence upon feudal revenues and services and enabled them to entertain mercenary troops. The middle class created by town economy helped to strengthen monarchy. They were naturally hostile to the feudal nobility. The expansion of trade needed safe roads and peaceful markets and in order to obtain them they supported the authority of the kings. They accumulated wealth and not only acquired higher standards of living but also developed a taste for culture. They founded schools which became centres of lay scholarship, independent of Church discipline. The products of these schools took service in the royal administrative departments and promoted the cause of royal authority.

On the Continent a section of the middle class studied Roman law and imported Roman ideas of law and order and of supreme centralised power into the domain of medieval politics.

Changes in the technique of war, for instance the use of gunpowder, increased the power of the kings and made the tactics of siege-warfare outmoded. While the power of the kings was increasing, the nobility was becoming weakened as a result of the economic changes which were affecting the manorial system. The end of the process was that monarchic absolutism prevailed and feudal autonomy was destroyed.

In the sphere of administration great departments of State came into being and they were presided over by high officials. The number of ministers, civil servants and clerks multiplied and the middle class which supplied them grew in influence.

In England the king was at the head of the administrative system and either directly or through his representatives took part in the legislative, judicial, fiscal and executive business. Next to him in authority were the great officials—the Justiciar or the Chief Minister who was in charge of law and finance, and when this office was abolished the Chancellor, the Treasurer, the Constable, and the Marshal were other prominent office-holders.

In the course of the thirteenth century legislation and taxation became the concern of Parliament which consisted of representatives of the nobility, the clergy and the middle class, and which retained for its upper house (the House of Lords) jurisdiction over certain types of cases. Parliament became the central organ for law making and for raising revenue for the State. Its activity powerfully promoted the unity of society, for its composition brought these classes into a

cooperative union, and its functioning affected all the subjects of the kingdom directly. In this way the growing activity of the State helped to end the isolation and self-sufficiency of the feudal units.

Justice likewise ceased to be a private affair of the feudal or communal courts. The king's central court extended its jurisdiction which operated through the King's Bench, the Court of Common Pleas and the Exchequer. The King's Bench exercised its authority in criminal cases and in all cases where there was a breach of the King's peace or unlawful use of force. The Court of Common Pleas heard all civil cases between the subjects of the State, and the Exchequer was concerned with suits relating to the royal revenue and with the collection and disposal of the revenue. The King's Council and Parliament were also parts of the judicial system.

The assumption of judicial powers by the king and his courts strongly assisted in the liquidation of the judicial authority of the feudal courts, for practically all cases which used to come before the manorial or borough courts passed under the jurisdiction of courts presided over by royal officers.

It is interesting to note that the progress of unification was accompanied with the emancipation of the king from dependence upon feudal revenues. Besides the feudal dues, reliefs, tallages, etc., new sources of income made their appearance; for example taxes upon all holders of land of whatever tenure, taxes on income and personal property, customs duties on imports and exports, court fees and fines, sale of privileges and offices. When these were not adequate for the needs of extravagant, ambitious and warlike kings, recourse was had to loans from middle-class financiers and bankers.

A similar development affected the army. Under the feudal system the king's army consisted of tenants by knight service who were bound to serve for forty days in the year and who resented service beyond the seas. In the twelfth century, realising the defects of the system, steps were taken to substitute money payments for military service. Then laws were made to arm all freemen according to their income. The duties of this force were to maintain peace and apprehend malefactors. Then commissioned officers of the king raised troops which were equipped and paid by the king himself. The king was enabled to do this because his revenues had increased. The mercenary soldiery and gunpowder were weapons which blew up the citadel of feudalism.

From the fourteenth to the sixteenth century the system of economic, social and political relations of the feudal age disintegrated. The basis of feudal society—personal relationship—which affected even the contractual and compulsory bonds between tenants and landlords, servile classes and freemen, knights and chiefs, chiefs and kings, masters and journeymen, and the hierarchy of the Church crumbled, and in its place a new system arose in which contractual and compulsory relations became stronger and personal bonds were weakened. This system lasted till the eighteenth century.

III THE MERCANTILIST SYSTEM

The two centuries—from the sixteenth to the eighteenth—following the break-up of the feudal system form a period of transition between the medieval and modern periods of European history. In the economic sphere the handicraft-based municipal trade of the Middle Ages was replaced by the mercantilist system, and in politics the loose confederalism of semi-autonomous estates of feudal lords by centralised and powerful monarchic autocracies. In the intellectual and spiritual spheres a revolution of a vast magnitude occurred which affected the attitudes, modes and processes of mind and stirred to their very depths the convictions of men. Thus a threefold movement transformed society and ushered in the age of modern, free and sovereign states resting on the basis of the territorial, secular, national and self-conscious societies of Europe. The members of these societies—individuals and groups—were united together by bonds of nationalist sentiment and territorial patriotism.

In the sphere of economy the mercantilist system replaced the feudal order. Mercantilism encouraged the foundation of new industries, and fostered them by means of subsidies, by grants of monopolies and exemption from taxes, by restricting foreign competition, by manipulating tariffs to support imports of raw materials and export of manufactured goods, and by exercising control for the maintenance of standards of production. But a number of other factors too helped in its furtherance; for instance, the growth of individualism which was itself a consequence of the passing away of the medieval system, the disappearance of the sway of village communities and of gilds, the release of the individual from the

control of the baron and the master in economic life, and the breaking down of the shackles upon intellect and spirit.

Among the factors which brought into existence the mercantilist economy, the accumulation of capital was the most important. It affected agriculture, commerce and industry. In agriculture the consolidation of farms and enclosure of lands for sheep farming helped to increase production, and provided labour for industry. On the commercial side the important developments were the rise of livery companies which placed handicrafts under the control of merchant entrepreneurs, the expansion of markets by the discovery of new routes and new lands—America and India—and the shifting of Europe's economic centre of gravity from the Mediterranean lands to the countries on the Atlantic seaboard.

The discovery of India and America had momentous consequences. Trade and industry leaped forward. By the end of the seventeenth century the national wealth of England from overseas trade was three times as large as that from Europe. Trade gave a great impulse to navigation and shipbuilding. From America a flood of gold and silver began to pour into Europe. It suddenly increased liquid capital and therefore gave a powerful push to entrepreneurial enterprises. New techniques of business and of industry benefited merchants and industrialists.

The coming of the mercantilist system also advanced the cause of economic unity, for it removed variations in coinage, weights and measures; it threw down customs barriers and city tolls, replaced local practices by general policies and established a cohesive economy. It enhanced the authority of the State. All its rivals—the Church, the town and the feudal estate—yielded to its expanding control. Again through mercantilist policies the State gained wealth and power, which were utilised in acquiring colonies, supporting armies and waging wars against rivals.

The mercantilist economy was based on the method of production known as the domestic system, according to which the craftsman worked at home with his family and owned the tools of production, but the middleman or entrepreneur supplied the raw materials and received the product which he marketed. In this way the merchant established direct contact with the purchaser and commanded the activity of the producer. Mercantilism marked the triumph of the middle class, of bourgeois capitalism.

Mercantilism was a counterpart of the political process by which the State was gathering all influence and power in its hands. In the sixteenth century the feudal aristocracy had ceased to compete with and limit the authority of the State; but the Church still exercised an influence on the intellect and faith of the people. The movements which freed man's mind and overthrew the discipline and organisation of the Roman Catholic Church were the Renaissance and the Reformation.

The Renaissance which began in Italy was a complex phenomenon. In its initial stages it was a recovery of the cultural heritage of ancient Greece. But Greek culture was the expression of a rational, critical, scientific spirit. This culture was steeped in humanism and rejoiced in the life of nature. The supernatural played an unimportant part in it.

On the other hand, religion exercised an all-pervading influence in feudal Europe, and not even political and economic life was wholly outside its direction and control. The Church also prescribed the limits within which reason functioned. It regulated the life and conduct of the Christians in all departments of life and laid down their standards of behaviour.

The Renaissance gave a mortal blow to the medieval theocratic system. Men now began to look to their own reason for the justification of their ways. They probed the claims of religious authority and tradition. They became interested in nature and science, in man and his joys and sorrows, and in adventure and beauty. The individual broke the shell of the narrow communal life in which he was confined.

The freedom thus gained soon spread to the domain of religion. Men like Luther began to examine the dogma and doctrine of the Roman Catholic Church and instead of anchoring their conscience on the rock of Peter, they began to find in personal faith the justification of their lives. The unity of the Church was riven. The kings of England, with the consent of Parliament, broke their allegiance to Rome and assumed the supreme authority in the territorial Church of England. In Germany a number of princes followed Luther in the repudiation of Papal supremacy and the Roman Catholic faith. Calvin led a similar movement in Switzerland. Protestantism spread to other countries of Europe.

The Reformation divided every European country into two

contending factions—Roman Catholic and Protestant. Each form of faith aimed at the control of not only the narrowly religious life of man, but also his political, economic and civic conduct. In the circumstances, war was inevitable, for when differences reach a stage where no compromise is possible, the sword becomes the arbiter.

For a hundred years, from the middle of the sixteenth to the middle of the seventeenth century, Europe was plunged in the wars of religion. After terrible massacres and devastating military campaigns at last the Europeans learnt the lesson that it was possible to be good Roman Catholics and good Protestants and yet remain loyal and devoted subjects of their territorial states.

Thus was politics secularised and religion purged of admixture with affairs rooted in sordid temporal interests of man. The advice of Jesus, "render unto Caesar the things that belong to Caesar and to God the things that are His", ultimately prevailed and peaceful conditions were established in which sects and communities forgot their differences and joined together as members of a common nationality in pursuit of common aims.

The three revolutions jointly operated to forge the modern Europe of nation states. Mercantilism provided the economic foundations of national unity and national power; the Renaissance promoted the formation of national languages and cultures; the Reformation caused the establishment of national Churches. The medieval universalism was replaced by the particularism of secular and territorial societies.

IV INDUSTRIAL REVOLUTION AND NATIONALISM

Under the centralised political authority of the monarchs the peoples of Europe developed the consciousness of national unity. This consciousness had two aspects—consciousness of identity of the people living in a particular country and of difference from peoples inhabiting other countries.

England was the first country where this national sentiment made its appearance. The reason was that the English Revolution of 1688 transferred power from the monarch to the people. Loyalty was transferred from the ruler to the people itself and the individual and society realised their unity in their Parliament. The first popular national hymn, "Rule Britannia", was composed in 1740.

In 1789 the old regime of France perished in the flames of a bloody revolution. In the conflagration the theory of the divine right of kings was reduced to ashes. The notorious vaunt of Louis XIV, "the State, I am the State", and his great-grandson Louis XV's boastful assertion, "It is only in my person that the sovereign authority resides . . . My people exist only in their union with me", were consigned to oblivion. From the Revolution, France emerged as a nation, and the victories of Napoleon covered her with glory.

Napoleon's conquests kindled the torch of nationalism in Europe, and during the nineteenth century country after country felt its glow. Greece and Belgium, Germany and Italy, Poland and Hungary were moved by the urge of nationalism and sought freedom and unity. Then Asia began to fall under its spell. Japan took the lead. Turkey, Iran, China and India all felt the stir and excitement. Today nationalism is a world-wide phenomenon. It moves and vivifies the peoples of all the continents.

It took Europe over seven centuries to traverse the distance between feudal anarchy and national solidarity. But once nationalism was established progress became rapid.

As the middle class was the harbinger of nationalism, it naturally was its first beneficiary also. Political power was transferred into its hands and the economy of the nations was dominated by its interests. The transfer of political authority from the king and a closed oligarchy to the bourgeoisie led to the emergence of free societies. These societies are free not only because they are independent of foreign control or intervention, not only because they are sovereign in the exercise of powers, but they are free because they obey authority embodied in their own will—the will of the people. In these societies political power is exercised by the representatives of the people elected by the people through the right of vote; economic freedom is secured through freedom of contract for the individual and free competition in industry; cultural freedom is guaranteed by the removal of restraints on the choice of the individual in the spheres of thought, expression, religion and vocation.

With the development of capitalist economy under the aegis of the middle class, production has made enormous strides and wealth has grown on an unprecedented scale. Increasingly large numbers of people have shared in prosperity and power, so that the process of the identification of the State with the totality of society has rapidly

advanced towards the realisation of full equality, freedom and democracy. During this evolution the significance and position of the individual, society and State have been revolutionised, and the concepts of human values and ends have undergone a complete transformation.

Expansion of Europe

The capitalist European society was urged by the logic of its own nature to seek expansion over the world to gather raw materials for its industry and to find new markets for its manufactures. In this search it reached India. England, the most advanced member of the capitalist Europe, then established its sway over the country and set in motion forces which transformed it. Thus impelled, India traversed the path to nationalism and the Indian people, roused and energised by the emergence of the consciousness of national unity, struggled for the attainment of freedom.

The light which the history of European social evolution provides helps in the understanding of the past of India. In the period before the advent of the Europeans the speed and rhythm of historical change followed a pattern peculiar to India. The tempo of this change was slow because the conditions of life were static. Population was either stationary or its tension was relieved by the large uninhabitated areas of the country. Methods of production were fixed and adequate for the modest needs of the people. Social stratification was inflexible and social mobility absent. Then in the middle of the eighteenth century the Indian people came into violent collision with a dynamic Western society different in all aspects of civilisation. In consequence, Western influences began to operate with terrific force. They quickened the processes of social change and produced effects similar to those experienced by Europe.

In India after the death of Aurangzeb, rapid decline set in. By the middle of the eighteenth century the central authority had been wholly destroyed, yielding place to confusion and anarchy. Unfortunately, no individual or group arose to replace the Mughal empire and to maintain the unity of the country. The political vacuum thus created invited the influx of foreign powers. Under similar conditions in the past the vacuum had been filled by invaders from Central Asia. In the eighteenth century the north-western neighbours of India were in the grip of internecine strife. Although Nadir Shah

in 1739, and Ahmad Shah Abdali between 1748 and 1773, led expeditions into India which dealt deadly blows to the tottering fabric of the empire of Delhi, the internal conditions in Iran, Afghanistan and Central Asia were unpropitious for the repetition of the achievements of Mahmud of Ghazni, Shahab-ud-Din Ghori and Babar.

Circumstances thus favoured the aliens from across the seas to establish their dominion in India. There were several competitors among them. Eventually the English defeated all their European rivals and brought the peoples of India under their rule.

With the battle of Plassey in 1757, the curtain goes up and then follows a poignant drama of intense human interest, of which the last scene was enacted on the 15th of August, 1947. The drama was truly an epic one. It took two centuries for its denouement. As in all other dramas, a titanic conflict of moral and material forces constitutes the substance of the plot. The prelude goes back to ancient times, but the history of the episodes of the dramatic epic begins in the early years of the eighteenth century, when old India began to fade away and new forces started to exercise their sway.

The unravelling of the drama moves through three acts. In the first act, an India whose virtue has failed her proceeds precipitately towards the loss of independence. In the second act, the shock of a wholly alien civilisation arouses a new spirit which disturbs the remnants of the old vitality into a fresh pattern of life. And in the last act, the India thus reborn marches steadily in the direction of self-realisation and freedom.

CHAPTER ONE

THE DECLINE AND FALL OF THE MUGHAL EMPIRE

I. AURANGZEB AND HIS SUCCESSORS

For fifty years Aurangzeb held the reins of an empire unequalled in size, population and wealth among the polities of the contemporary world. In the discharge of his extremely onerous duties he had shown a devotion, assiduity, courage and calmness which mark him out as a unique ruler of men. In personal life he was the model of a good man. He was free from the vices so common among Asian potentates and princes. He lived simply, nay, austerely. He was abstemious in food and drink, in dress and all the amenities of life. While engaged in the heavy work of imperial administration, he found time to earn money to provide for his needs by copying the Quran and sewing caps. In his last will, his instructions concerning his funeral expenses were, "Four rupees and two annas, out of the price of caps sewn by me, are with Aia Beg, the *Mahaldar*. Take the amount and spend it on the shroud of this helpless creature. Three hundred and five rupees, from the wages of copying the *Quran*, are in my purse for personal expenses. Distribute them to the faqirs on the day of my death."[1] His daily routine was exacting, and he gave only three hours to sleep out of the twenty-four.[2] He was a stern taskmaster, equally of his own self and of others. He supervised every detail of his vast administration and he directed personally every military expedition. He had inexhaustible energy and indomitable will.

Yet, in spite of his enormous industry, his sleepless watchfulness, his puritanical piety, his undoubted ability as administrator, diplomat, and general, his reign was a failure. He was aware of this. In his last letter to his second son Azam he confessed, "I have not at all done any (true) government of the realm or cherishing of the peasantry. Life, so valuable, has gone away for nothing."[3]

In his lifetime Aurangzeb had divided his empire amongst his three sons, Muazzam, Azam and Kam Bakhsh. But he had hardly closed his eyes when dissensions broke out amongst them for

[1] Sarkar, Jadunath, *History of Aurangzib*, Vol. V, p. 264
[2] Sarkar, Jadunath, *Studies in Aurangzib's Reign*, p 38
[3] Sarkar, Jadunath, *History of Aurangzib*, *op. cit.*, p 259

succession to the throne. In the struggle between the brothers, Muazzam proved victorious and he ascended the throne under the title of Bahadur Shah. His reign was short. He died in 1712 after ruling for four years. Then the usual war of succession broke out again.

The four sons were in such indecent haste that the old man's dead body was not buried for nearly a month. The war resolved itself into a contest between Azim-ush-Shan, the second and the ablest son, on the one side, and Jahandar Shah, a voluptuary, on the other. But the folly and dilatoriness of Azim-ush-Shan in the conduct of the war and the able generalship of Zulfiqar Khan, a prominent leader of the Irani party and Mir Bakhshi (First Paymaster) of the imperial army, won the throne for Jahandar Shah.

With the accession of Jahandar Shah a new but sinister factor entered into the politics of the empire. So far the princes themselves were the principal contestants in the war of succession. Now they receded into the background. Instead, ambitious nobles, great office-holders and leaders of factions, became the real competitors for power. They used the princes as the nominal heads and ostensible champions, because their names carried prestige and the royal seal conferred legality upon orders and decrees. These powerful chiefs played the part of king-makers, exercised authority and patronage and accumulated wealth. The internecine conflicts, thus let loose, swept away the grand edifice of the empire.

Jahandar Shah was a reckless profligate, "a mad hemp-eater". He set the evil example of a licentious and effeminate court life and vitiated the morals of the ruling class. His influence not only made the recovery of the old imperial glory impossible, but also removed all chances of the survival of an independent principality of even modest dimensions.

The king was reduced to a puppet and all authority was wielded by the Wazir and the ministers. In their turn they passed on their duties to their deputies. Thus responsibility was divided and offices were transferred from person to person according to the whim and fancy of the minister in power. The temporary incumbents used these opportunities to make rapid gains. As a result, administration was neglected and disorder spread. All sense of loyalty vanished with the appearance of many claimants to the throne and the kaleidoscopic change of emperors.

During his eleven months' reign Jahandar Shah squandered away

most of the treasures accumulated by his predecessors. The gold and silver and other precious articles collected since Babar's time were thrown away.

Then the Saiyids of Barha put up Farrukh Siyar against the emperor, who supinely deserted the army and fled from the battle-field in the company of his favourite mistress, Lal Kunwar.

Unfortunately, Farrukh Siyar proved a contemptible character. He was faithless to promises, ungrateful to benefactors, tortuous in intrigues, fickle-minded, cowardly and cruel. He was led by his personal favourites Mir Jumla and Khan Dauran Khan. He started to pick quarrels with the Saiyid brothers, and endeavoured to exercise real power. The Saiyid brothers who had placed their un-doubted talents and considerable resources at his disposal, naturally demanded complete control over the government, particularly in the matter of appointments, and in the distribution of the spoils of victory.

From day to day the conflict became more bitter. In the desire to shake off the control of the Saiyids, Farrukh Siyar resorted to trea-chery and intrigue of the most reprehensible kind. Husain Ali was deputed to lead the imperial forces to quell insurrections in Rajputana. At the same time secret letters were written to the rebel Ajit Singh Rathor, Raja of Jodhpur, promising him rich rewards if he would do away with Husain Ali. The scheme failed. Ajit Singh submitted and, what is more, passed on the letters of the emperor to Husain Ali. Then another plot was hatched. Nizam-ul-Mulk, the viceroy of the Deccan, was recalled and the province was placed in the charge of Husain Ali. When he was on his way to the south, Daud Khan, deputy governor of the Deccan, was secretly instigated to obstruct him. This plot also miscarried. Daud was defeated and killed.

Three years of manoeuvres and counter-manoeuvres followed. The king tried one trusted nobleman after another to lay hold of Abdullah while his brother was in the Deccan, but none had the courage to carry out his nefarious designs. Raja Ajit Singh, his father-in-law, was summoned to the aid. But the shrewd old ruler of Jodhpur knew the character of his son-in-law. He came to Delhi, but threw in his lot with Saiyid Abdullah. Even such stalwart scions of the Mughal aristocracy and leaders of the Turani party, as Nizam-ul-Mulk and his cousin Muhammad Amin Khan, turned against the vacillating and undependable king.

When the story of the weaving of these plots reached Husain Ali, he made haste to return to the north. He reached Delhi in 1719, and resolved to end this sorry state of affairs once and for all. Among his forces were 11,000 Maratha troops led by Peshwa Balaji Vishwanath, Senapati Khande Rao Dabhade, Santaji Bhonsle and others. The fort and palace in Delhi were cleared of the partisans of Farrukh Siyar. The king, who had pusillanimously taken refuge in the women's compartments, was dragged out, blinded and confined in "a bare, dark, unfurnished hole." After a few days in which indignities were heaped upon him, he was starved, beaten, given slow poison and at last put to death in the most ignominious manner.

During the few years of Farrukh Siyar's reign, the empire took long strides towards dissolution. Disorder raised its ugly head everywhere. Chiefs, landholders and leaders of tribal bands began to defy government authority. Fighting took place among the followers of the grandees in the streets of Delhi. Roads became infested with thieves and robbers. Farrukh Siyar had set the example of misappropriating provincial revenues on their way to the imperial treasury—an example which was not lost upon the ambitious adventurers who were anxious to carve out independent principalities. Imperial orders began to be openly flouted and officers left their posts without permission. The rules and regulations which used to be strictly enforced in Aurangzeb's time were neglected. Corruption and laxity prevailed. As income dwindled and the accumulated wealth was exhausted, salaries fell into arrears. The unpaid troops became mutinous.

The most sinister development, however, was the rivalry and jealousy among the nobles belonging to the different factions. Among them four were important: the Turanis, the Iranis, the Afghans and the Hindustanis. The first three were descendants of foreigners from Central Asia, Iran and Afghanistan, who had come to India and were given employment in the civil and military departments. Many of these families had migrated to India during the reign of Aurangzeb and were given high posts. The Turanis who came from Trans-Oxiana professed the Sunni faith. The Iranis migrated from the eastern and western provinces of Iran—Khurasan and Fars. They were Shias. The Afghans came from the mountainous border regions across the Indus. Many of them belonged to the Rohilla tribe. They were mostly Sunnis. They had formed permanent settlements in a number of places in northern India, mainly round Bareilli and Farrukhabad.

Among the Hindustani nobles were Muslim families which had been settled in the country for many generations. Naturally they were jealous of the new arrivals.

So long as the central authority was strong, these factions remained under control, but after Bahadur Shah's death their importance and influence increased because rival claimants to the throne solicited their aid. The history of the eighteenth century is filled with their intrigues and the tale of their changes of loyalty with bewildering rapidity.

Each faction tried to achieve its aim by obtaining control over the person of the emperor. In this it was not deterred from employing any means and seeking help wherever available irrespective of the price. Thus when Husain Ali decided to depose Farrukh Siyar, he brought in the Marathas and forced the emperor not only to confirm the Swarajya which was claimed on the strength of Shivaji's conquests, but also to grant them *chauth* and *sardeshmukhi* of the Deccan, that is, 35 per cent of the revenue of the province estimated at the fabulous sum of 18 crores of rupees. Although by this transaction "the ruler of the Maratha State became henceforth a vassal and an obedient servant of the Emperor", yet he gained accession to his revenues, and an excuse to interfere in the affairs of the empire.

The Saiyid brothers did not enjoy their triumph long. Muhammad Shah, whom they raised to the throne, resented their tutelage. The leaders of the Turani faction, Nizam-ul-Mulk, governor of the Deccan, Mir Muhammad Amin Khan, head of the Mughal soldiery, and his cousin Abdus Samad Khan, governor of Lahore, as well as the chiefs of the Irani faction, were tired of the domination of the Saiyids and decided to destroy them. The Saiyids, on receiving these reports, took steps to deprive them of their offices. But the troops which they sent against Nizam-ul-Mulk were defeated and their commander killed. Thereupon Husain Ali, taking Muhammad Shah with him, proceeded in person to curb Nizam-ul-Mulk. Muhammad Amin Khan who accompanied Husain Ali as his second Bakhshi, hatched a plot to murder the Saiyid, and after the army had left Fatehpur Sikri, the plot was carried out and Husain Ali was murdered (A.D. 1720). Abdullah was infuriated and in order to avenge his brother's death, resolved to depose Muhammad Shah and challenged him to battle. But he was defeated and taken prisoner. Two years later he was poisoned in prison. Thus within twenty-one

months of Farrukh Siyar's deposition, the king-makers had met their doom.

The young Muhammad Shah had no interest in government. He spent his time in frivolous pursuits surrounded by low favourities. He left everything to his Wazir, Qamar-ud-Din Khan, son of Mir Muhammad Amin Khan. But the Wazir proved an indolent, procrastinating and pleasure-loving person. Delhi was left without government. The provincial governors received no help when in trouble. Thus when Nadir Shah threatened Afghanistan and the governor of Kabul asked for reinforcements of troops and money to pay the arrears, no heed was given to his requests.

The leading nobles, jealous of the power of Qamar-ud-Din, were traitorously intriguing against the empire with its enemies. They had become so supine that they shirked all military tasks involving any risk. None of them was willing to face the Marathas and they invented excuses when ordered to proceed against the recalcitrant Raja of Jodhpur. The example of the emperor and the nobles was spreading demoralisation all round.

The results were disastrous. The empire began to disintegrate. Many provinces became virtually independent. Murshid Quli Khan in Bihar, Bengal and Orissa, and Saadat Khan in Oudh, paid only nominal allegiance to Delhi. The governors of Kabul and Lahore were left to their own resources. The Marathas occupied Gujarat, Malwa and a part of Bundelkhand. In the Doab, the Rohillas were setting up autonomous chieftainships.

In Rajputana there were three leading houses. Of them the Sisodias of Mewar took little interest in Mughal politics, although they acknowledged the suzerainty of the emperor. The Rathors of Jodhpur had been hostile to Aurangzeb since the death of Jaswant Singh, but became reconciled after his death. But their loyalty remained unstable, although they accepted high offices. The Kachhwahs of Jaipur who had a more consistent record of loyalty, were affected by the general moral deterioration. Raja Jai Singh, who had quelled the Jat insurrection led by Churaman, was appointed Subahdar of Malwa to stem the tide of annual Maratha raids. But instead of defending the imperial interests, he entered into collusion with the Marathas, with the result that the province was lost.

Even the immediate confines of Delhi were exposed to danger. The Sikhs, the Jats, the Rohillas and the Marathas hovered all

round. In 1737, Baji Rao rode up to the capital and exposed the helplessness of the empire. Disorder raged within and outside the imperial capital.

II INVASION OF NADIR SHAH

But a far greater misfortune now befell the empire. A year after Baji Rao's attack on Delhi, Nadir Shah, the king of Iran, marched into northern Afghanistan. The state of unpreparedness and neglect made it easy for him to enter Kabul. Then he crossed the Khyber and swiftly moved on to Lahore meeting with little resistance on the way. The threat to Delhi stirred the Mughals to action and Muhammad Shah and his army reached Karnal where they entrenched themselves. But the ineptitude of the generals and their lack of mutual understanding brought on them a crushing defeat. Defeat created demoralisation. Suspicion, fear, and anxiety were powerful inducements for the commanders to work against one another in an effort for self-preservation. Treachery followed. Saadat Khan, governor of Oudh, who had been taken prisoner in the fight, was an Irani. He was jealous of the Turanis, especially Nizam-ul-Mulk, who had been appointed the principal adviser of the emperor. Blinded by the passion for revenge, he worked upon the cupidity of Nadir Shah and induced him to move on to Delhi where he would obtain wealth beyond his dreams.

Nadir's avarice was excited. He took the emperor prisoner and marched down to Delhi. He was proclaimed emperor of Hindustan from the pulpit of the Jama Masjid and coins were struck in his name. Delhi dreaded the occupation. When Nadir and his officers began a systematic loot of the prominent and the wealthy and extorted money by heaping on the people indignity and torture, great anger was aroused. A small incident created a tumult and Nadir gave orders for a general massacre. Streams of blood ran through the streets, and fire engulfed whole markets and bazaars in flames. Nadir collected an enormous indemnity, and seized gold and silver plate, jewels, the Peacock Throne, precious treasures collected by the emperors for several generations. Numerous elephants, horses and camels and some fifteen crores of rupees in cash were carried away.

The conqueror had no plans to stay in India. He conferred the crown upon Muhammad Shah and departed with his enormous

booty. Nadir Shah's invasion gave a blow to the empire from which it never recovered. The province of Kabul was lost and the frontier of India was pushed back to the Indus, leaving the Khyber pass and Peshawar in the hands of the enemy.

The Panjab became a prey to anarchy and invasion. Zakariya Khan was the governor at Lahore when Nadir conquered the Panjab. He died in 1745, and then a war broke out between his sons for the governorship. One of them invited Ahmad Shah Abdali, who had succeeded Nadir Shah on the throne of Kabul. From now on till his death in 1773, Abdali harried and plundered the Panjab.

The India of the latter halfof the eighteenth century offers a perfect illustration of the Hobbesian state of nature. It resembled a jungle in which fierce and beastly men prowled round, animated by intensely selfish and extraordinarily short-sighted passion for power. They were restrained neither by ethical considerations nor any far-sighted aims. Their intrigues and machinations in the pursuit of their desires, their resort to force and fraud to achieve their immediate objects would put Machiavelli to shame. India exhausted and ruined herself in the insensate and virulent struggles of contending personalities and factions, but failed to throw up a leader of sufficient commanding stature who could evolve order out of chaos.

Notwithstanding the political and moral decline, the eighteenth century was not short of bold, intrepid and resolute individuals, full of energy and resource. There were many exuberant, lustful and reckless men who gambled with their lives with a wantonness which extorts admiration. But what they lacked was a worthy goal which could direct their activities into useful channels and give a meaning to their lives. They were like rudderless boats drifting upon a storm-tossed sea.

Their unbridled ambitions reduced the empire to anarchy. In Rohilkhand the Rohillas drove out the imperial officers, usurped their jagirs and established autonomous principalities. Beyond Rohilkhand, Oudh, Bihar, Bengal and Orissa had already assumed virtual independence. South of the Jamuna up to Rajputana in the west and the Chambal river in the south, the Jats dominated. Beyond, the Marathas were wreaking their will on Rajputana, the Doab, and the eastern provinces of India. Gujarat and Malwa were under their control, the Rajput principalities were at their mercy, and the Deccan rendered them tribute.

The effective rule of the Mughal emperor had thus shrunk to the territory round Delhi and Agra, although he still claimed formal authority over the greater part of Hindustan, and continued to confer titles and confirm appointments.

The laxity of administration sapped the inner strength of the empire. Reckless extravagance in the distribution of jagirs had greatly reduced the area of the crown-lands reserved for the privy purse of the emperor. The treasury became empty and the decline of revenue made it impossible to maintain regular troops and to equip them. The large casualties among the higher and lower nobility in the civil wars made it difficult to find suitable personnel for civil and military offices. Without an adequate army the emperor became utterly helpless. Thus after Muhammad Shah's defeat at Karnal in 1739, Delhi ceased to be the centre of a unified empire.

III THE INVASIONS OF AHMAD SHAH ABDALI

When Nadir Shah was proclaimed the emperor of India in the Friday address in the mosques of Delhi, history seemed to repeat itself. Twice before, viz. in the last quarter of the twelfth century and again in the first quarter of the sixteenth, under similar conditions a foreign power had brought India under its sway. These conquerors of India were land powers who followed the land-routes to India.

But in the sixteenth century a different type of power hailing from across the oceans and sailing along the sea-lanes began making its existence felt on the coastal regions of India. Would the political vacuum created by the dissolution of the Mughal empire be filled by indigenous elements, or by a land power from the north-west, or in a new way by a power from unexpected quarters, could not be predicted at the moment. Soon, however, destiny began to take a definite shape, and by the end of the eighteenth century no doubt remained regarding the future.

Between Nadir Shah's victory at Karnal in 1739 and Lake's occupation of Delhi in 1803, India passed through one of its most humiliating and unhappy periods of history. Delhi was shorn of all its historic glory and imperial power, but its magic name still exercised influence upon the minds of men, and amidst the multi-cornered strife, which like a plague ravaged the country, Delhi continued as the centre round which all ambitions converged. Only the wearer of the imperial

crown was a show-piece who played a subordinate and altogether inglorious role in these transactions.

The story of the *rois faineants* that occupied the throne of Delhi may be told briefly. Nadir Shah had come and gone, but the nobles of the empire had learnt no lesson from their terrible misfortunes. There was no abatement in the jealousy and rivalry of the Turanis and the Iranis. They continued to fight. In 1739, Qamar-ud-Din Khan and his cousin Nizam-ul-Mulk were the Wazir (Prime Minister) and the Mir Bakhshi (Paymaster General) respectively. They were opposed by the Iranis led by Safdarjang, governor of Oudh, and assisted by the Hindustani party. Even among the top Turanis there was no unity. Muhammad Shah's favourites wanted to get rid of the Turanis. Nizam-ul-Mulk, disgusted with the ways of the court and the behaviour of the Wazir, left Delhi for the Deccan in 1740. Qamar-ud-Din continued as Wazir but power passed into the hands of Safdarjang and his followers.

In 1748 came the first invasion of Ahmad Shah Abdali, who had succeeded to the provinces of Herat, Qandahar and Kabul after the assassination of Nadir Shah. The civil war between the two sons of Zakariya Khan, the governor of Lahore and Multan, and the treasonable overtures of Shah Nawaz Khan, his younger brother, gave Ahmad Shah an excuse to lead his expedition into India. Having captured Lahore, he moved on to Sarhind and invested the imperial army which under Prince Ahmad had entrenched itself in a village near the town. A battle ensued in which, though the Wazir Qamar-ud-Din was killed, the Mughal army drove the Abdali's troops from the field and compelled him to retreat to his country.

The immediate result of this unexpected success was the peaceful succession of Ahmad Shah on the death of his father Muhammad Shah on April 26, 1748. The new emperor was "a good-natured imbecile", who had received no training for war or administration. "From his infancy to the age of 21, he had been brought up among the women of the harem, in neglect and poverty and often subjected to his father's brow-beating." The affairs of the state naturally fell into the hands of the favourites, "the king's friends", "a cabal of eunuchs and women", headed by the queen-mother Udham Bai, who before her marriage with Muhammad Shah was a public dancing girl. She promoted worthless men into high office, receiving large presents in money for every appointment. No one cared for the

administration, and the governors and nobles misappropriated the royal revenues. Their example was followed by strong landlords who usurped the lands of their weak neighbours.

The Irani faction was now in the ascendant with Safdarjang, governor of Oudh, their leader, as Wazir. But he was faced with enormous difficulties. The Turani nobles were opposed to him; the king's favourites thwarted his policies and turned the feeble Ahmad Shah against him. The Wazir, moreover, could not devote undivided attention to the affairs of Delhi because his own province needed a great deal of care. The Rohillas were his sworn enemies and laxity prevailed in the internal administration of the province.

In such circumstances, Ahmad Shah Abdali and his Afghans threatened from the north and the Marathas from the south. Henceforth, the principal actors in the tragic events that led eventually to the extinction of Indian independence were the leaders of these two groups. The Mughal emperor and his nobles were just pawns in the game, and the other chiefs played a minor and ignoble role.

Abdali invaded the Panjab after his failure in 1748, in the autumn of 1749. Its governor, Muin-ul-Mulk, was the son of the late Wazir Qamar-ud-Din. But he was a *persona non-grata* with the party in power in Delhi, and consequently he received no support. He was obliged to cede territory and pay a large ransom to the Abdali chief. Such easy prey whetted Abdali's appetite and in 1751 he was in India for the third time. Muin offered whatever resistance he could, unaided by the central government, and then was obliged to surrender. The Panjab and the Multan subahs passed into the hands of the Afghan ruler, and Delhi was exposed to immediate danger.

While the Panjab was being overrun by the Afghans, the Wazir Safdarjang was engaged in uprooting the Rohilla "serpents infesting his road to Delhi." But their chief, Ahmad Khan Bangash, was both wary and resilient, and he inflicted defeat and disgrace upon the luxury-loving Irani aristocrat. Safdar was, therefore, forced to enter into a subsidiary alliance with the Marathas and to buy the aid of the Jats to protect himself from the Rohilla menace. Malhar Rao Holkar and Jayapa Sindhia were promised Rs. 25,000 a day for their contingents and Surajmal Jat Rs. 15,000. They cleared the Doab, pressed back the Rohillas to the foot of the Himalayas and then concluded with them a peace by which the expenses of the campaign were transferred from Safdarjang to them.

The Maratha Sardars had already acquired Malwa, overrun Gujarat, raided and plundered Bihar, Bengal and Orissa, irrupted into Rajputana, and now (1752) they acquired outposts in the Doab, a lodgement in the very heart of the empire. By the subsidiary treaty of March 1752, they assumed the role of the defenders of the empire and obtained an opportunity to interfere in the politics of Delhi. This brought the two protagonists for supremacy—the Afghans and the Marathas—face to face.

They were soon bound to come to a headlong collision. But before this happened, Delhi and the imperial court suffered untold misery and humiliation. Safdarjang's greed and vanity had antagonised the nobles and offended the emperor. A conspiracy was set on foot by the queen-mother to remove him. His agents were expelled from the fort and his offer to resign, which he thought would frighten the emperor into submission, was accepted. Thereupon the irate minister declared open war upon his master. His allies, the Jats, plundered Delhi.

Meanwhile, the Turani nobility too pulled their full weight against the Irani domination. Itimad-ud-Daulah, a son of Qamar-ud-Din, became the Wazir, and Imad-ul-Mulk, grandson of Nizam-ul-Mulk Asaf Jah I, the Mir Bakhshi. They called in the Rohillas under Najib Khan (entitled Najib-ud-Daulah), and the Marathas under Antaji Mankeshwar to their help. Safdarjang's attempts to capture the fort of Delhi misfired; but the exhaustion of funds, the inability to pay the army and the differences between the Wazir and the Mir Bakhshi, induced the emperor to make peace. Safdarjang retired to his province of Oudh (1753).

The civil war had plunged the government into enormous financial difficulties, and the troops clamoured for arrears of pay. The streets of Delhi were a scene of daily riot and tumult and there was no safety for life or property from the mutinous troops and the Rohilla and Maratha freebooters. Then Safdarjang's retirement accentuated the differences between the Wazir and the Mir Bakhshi. As the emperor leaned upon the Wazir, the Mir Bakhshi supported by the Marathas determined to get rid of the emperor. The rebellious Mir Bakhshi and his allies forced him to dismiss Itimad and instal Imad as Wazir. Imad's first act as Wazir was to depose the poor and helpless Ahmad Shah. He placed on the throne the fifty-five year old Prince Aziz-ud-Din as Alamgir II. Then he murdered him in cold blood

five years later (1759) for his attempt to release himself from bondage.

The five years of office of this incompetent but ambitious and unscrupulous Wazir were a period of utter disorder, bankruptcy and suffering. Shame and humiliation were the lot of the king, the ministers and the people.

Imad and Safdarjang had both invited the Marathas for support. The Peshwa sent Raghunath Rao to the north, but by the time he arrived the two had made up their quarrel. Balked of their booty, the Marathas turned against the Jats and the Rajputs for obstructing them from occupying the provinces of Agra and Ajmer conferred upon them by the subsidiary treaty of 1752. In this pursuit Raghunath Rao and Malhar Rao Holkar ravaged and plundered the Doab, and Jayapa Sindhia and his brother Dattaji harried Rajputana. Then collecting their loot, the chiefs returned to Poona and the long expedition of two years (1753-55) ended without any important achievement. Raghunath Rao's conduct left behind a legacy of fear, anger, and hatred among all the people in the north, with disastrous consequences.

In 1752, the Panjab had passed under the vassalage of the Afghans. But Ahmad Shah had left its government in the hands of Muin-ul-Mulk, on whose death in 1753, conditions rapidly deteriorated and a state of anarchy supervened. In this predicament Mughlani Begum, Muin's widow, appealed to Ahmad Shah and Imad-ul-Mulk to restore order. Before Ahmad Shah had taken any action, Imad marched up to Lahore and appointed his own governor and deputy-governor. This was an encroachment which the Afghan king could not tolerate. He sent in advance his general who captured Lahore and then followed himself at the head of a large force in 1757.

Then hell was veritably let loose upon the people of northern India. The Panjab became a scene of violence and chaos in which the Sikhs, Mughals and Afghans contested. The invader occupied Lahore and Sarhind and then advanced to Delhi, which was altogether unprepared to meet him. The Rohilla chief Najib-ud-Daulah deserted his master and joined the Afghans. Imad made desperate efforts to induce the Jats, Marathas and Rajputs to come to his aid, but failed. Without offering any resistance, the pusillanimous Wazir surrendered the capital to the invader. A reign of extortion and tyranny followed which stripped Delhi to the bone. The rich and

the poor, noblemen and commoners, men and women, all suffered torture and disgrace indiscriminately.

Delhi's sufferings, however, pale into insignificance compared to what happened in the holy places of Mathura, Gokul and Brindaban. The Afghan army, after pillaging Delhi, marched out leaving a trail of burning villages, rotting corpses and desolation. Crushing the Jats on the way, they proceeded to Mathura, Brindaban and Gokul. The carnage and destruction that visited the sacred towns beggars description. For seven days following the general slaughter 'the water (of the Jamuna) flowed of a blood-red colour', testified a Muslim jeweller of the city of Mathura who was robbed of his all and was fasting for several days. Temples were desecrated, priests and sadhus put to the sword, women dishonoured and children cut to pieces. There was no atrocity which was not perpetrated.

But the most shameful aspect of this tragic episode is the indifference of the supposed guardians and protectors of these places. The Marathas, who had raised the banner of Hindavi Swarajya and boasted it would fly from Kanya Kumari to Attock, who had offered to defend the empire from foreign aggression and had recently taken over the governorship of the Agra province and claimed authority over the holy places of Hindu pilgrimage in the name of religion and were, therefore, bound in honour to defend the Vraja Mandal, abjectly failed Hinduism in its agony. The Jats offered some resistance, because the Afghans were ravishing their homeland, but after losing in a preliminary encounter, they retired to nurse their wounds and left the people to their cruel fate. The Rajputs, immersed in their petty feuds, were utterly oblivious of what was happening in the rest of India. The emperor of Delhi, the lawful sovereign of India and the protector of the people, was grovelling in the dust, a prisoner in the hands of the foreign conqueror.

Thus the cry of anguish which arose from Delhi, Mathura, Agra and a thousand towns and villages in northern India remained unheard. But what man could not do, nature accomplished. The frightful career of the Afghan army was halted by an outbreak of cholera. The soldiers clamoured for returning home. Abdali was forced to retire but not before he had collected a booty estimated at three to twelve crores of rupees, and inflicted unspeakable indignity upon the house of Timur. Emperor Muhammad Shah was forced to give in marriage his sixteen-year-old daughter to this "fierce Afghan of

grandfatherly age, whose two ears had been docked and nose was rotting from a leprous carbuncle."[1] It was a bitter price to pay. But politics knows no pity and innocent people suffer for the folly, ineptitude and culpability of their rulers.

Ahmad Shah returned to Qandahar leaving Najib-ud-Daulah as his agent in Delhi. He was given the post of Mir Bakhshi and endowed with the entire powers of government. Imad, the old Wazir, was deprived of authority, but the dignity of Vakil-i-Mutlaq, which carried no responsibility, was conferred upon him.

Immediately after Ahmad Shah's departure the old game restarted. Imad began to plot the overthrow of Najib. The Marathas also reappeared in the north after the Abdali storm had passed away. They rapidly recovered their jagirs, forts and posts, drove out the usurpers, re-established their control over the Doab and began collecting their levies.

The emperor and Imad made an alliance with the Marathas to oust Najib. The latter tried to fight them, but being thwarted by his rivals wreaked vengeance upon the ladies of Imad's household and then finding resistance hopeless, surrendered unconditionally. The way was open for the Marathas to become masters of Delhi and of the empire.

From Delhi the Maratha forces, under Raghunath Rao and Malhar Rao Holkar, marched into the Panjab and occupied Lahore in April 1758. They drove out the agents of Ahmad Shah and appointed Adina Beg as their governor.

Najib, who since his expulsion from Delhi was biding his time, entered into correspondence with Abdali and induced him to come to India for the recovery of his dominion. The Marathas with Dattaji Sindhia in command proceeded to punish Najib, who barred their progress from behind an entrenched and fortified post near Muzaffarnagar. Here the besieged Rohilla chief defied the Marathas for months, till he received reinforcements of Hindu troops sent by the Nawab of Oudh under the Gosains. His efforts in the other direction had also borne fruit. Abdali set out from Kabul and crossed the Indus. Driving the Maratha detachments before him, he moved rapidly across the Panjab towards Delhi. Dattaji made a vain attempt to stop him at Thanesar. Failing in that he fell back to guard

[1] Sarkar, Jadunath, *Fall of the Mughal Empire*, Vol. II, p. 128 (Sarkar's use of the term 'grandfatherly' is somewhat inexact, for Abdali was about 35 years of age in 1757)

the crossings of the Jamuna, but his army was again worsted, and Dattaji himself was killed. Malhar Rao, who tried to harass Abdali, met with repulses and had to retreat into Rajputana.

The news of these reverses in the north caused consternation in Poona and it was decided to send a strong army under a member of the Peshwa's family to retrieve the situation. Sadashiv Rao Bhau, cousin of Balaji Baji Rao, was selected for the command while Vishwas Rao, the Peshwa's son, acted nominally as the chief of the army. They marched to the north with 22,000 Maratha troops and 8,000 disciplined sepoys under Ibrahim Khan Gardi who had received artillery training under the French General Bussy. The Maratha forces in the north, that is, the contingents of Holkar, Sindhia and other captains, garrisoning posts round Delhi, joined the forces of Bhau.

The Marathas hoped to attach their old ally, the Nawab of Oudh, to their cause, and also expected that the Rajputs and Jats would actively support them. But in spite of the long-standing and bitter hostility between the Rohillas and the Nawab the latter chose to throw in his lot with Abdali, although in a somewhat lukewarm manner. What weighed with him was the fact that Najib and Abdali were already present with their forces in the Doab and could easily overrun his territories. The Marathas were far from his boundaries on the other side of the Jamuna, and could only reach him after sweeping away the combined Afghan and Rohilla armies. The success of the Marathas spelt for him permanent subordination, while Abdali was known to have no desire to stay in India. The Marathas had betrayed his father and their word could not be relied upon.

The Rajput princes could not forget the recent ravages of their lands by the Marathas and were not willing to join any side, but they would throw in their lot with whoever triumphed in the end. Surajmal, the Jat ruler, was suspicious of the Marathas for he had little faith in their promises and had been confirmed in his attitude by the ill-conceived designs of the Maratha governor of the region, Govind Ballal Bundela, who coveted the newly built Jat fort of Aligarh.[1]

Evidently the Marathas had not a single friend or ally in the north, and within their own ranks there were differences in regard to

[1] Sarkar, Jadunath, *Fall of the Mughal Empire*, Vol. II (1934 edition), p. 256

the tactics to be employed against Abdali. The only success of their arms was their entry into Delhi, because Ahmad Shah was campaigning in the Doab, and Delhi had only a small garrison which could not sustain a siege against the mighty Maratha host.

But Delhi proved a snare. The Peshwa had no funds to spare, the revenue of jagirs and estates was difficult to collect in the then disturbed conditions and plunder yielded little profit. There was scarcity of food for men and horses, supplies were running short and the enemy hovered all round. The gravity of the situation compelled Bhau to move out of Delhi. Abdali's position was perhaps only a shade better than that of Bhau, because he was also feeling the pinch of dwindling funds, and was anxious to go home. But Najib's contribution of money and materials and Bhau's uncompromising attitude were powerful arguments in favour of his staying on and following the issue to the bitter end.

The two antagonists came face to face at Panipat. In the campaign the Maratha commander made two fatal mistakes—allowing his line of communications to be cut and abandoning the traditional methods of Maratha warfare. Relying upon the guns of his trained corps, he immobilised his vast horde of soldiers and camp followers behind a broad and deep line of trenches. The Afghan army lay astride the road leading to the south and Abdali threw his guards around and cut off the Maratha communications and supplies. "The country around was all hostile to the Marathas and burning for revenge against their fearful depredations in the past."[1] Hence no succour reached Bhau's camp, and stark starvation stared it in the face. Goaded to desperation by hunger, Bhau resolved upon the hazard of battle. On the 14th of January, 1761, he marched out of the camp and the contestants were locked in mortal combat.

In the Indian wars the issue has mainly depended upon the quality of the leader. At Panipat a resourceful general, a veteran with long experience of wars in Central Asia and India, was pitted against a comparatively young commander who had only led campaigns against south Indian troops in Karnatak. Abdali possessed an advantage over the Marathas in numbers, firing power, body armour, and the quality of mounts. The superiority of the Afghan general and his captains over the Marathas and the better morale and discipline of the Afghan army won the day. The Marathas made furious

[1] Sardesai, G S, *New History of the Marathas*, Vol II, p. 430

charges and fought with a tenacity and valour worthy of a great people, but starvation had enfeebled them and by the afternoon they were exhausted. Their centre was hemmed in by the musketeers of Abdali and the men were driven together into a confused and heaving mass. The left wing under Ibrahim Khan Gardi attacked the Rohillas who formed the right wing of Abdali's army, but after an obstinate and bloody encounter in which 80 per cent of his musketeers were sacrificed, they were forced to leave the field. The Maratha right led by Sindhia and Holkar stood facing Najib and Shuja-ud-Daulah, but they took little part in the battle; and when they saw that the centre and the left wing had been pierced, Holkar fled and the contingents of Sindhia followed him. The defeat turned into a rout, and terrific slaughter ensued. On the field there lay the corpses of 28,000 men. Most of the officers were killed. Both Vishwas Rao and Bhau died fighting heroically.

The defeat at Panipat was a disaster of the first magnitude, but it was by no means decisive. For Abdali it was an empty victory. As soon as his back was turned his conquests fell to pieces. He and his successors were pestered by rebellions at home, and were menaced by the Uzbegs and the Persians from the north and the west. They were unable to give adequate support to their agents in India. The Sikhs swarmed over from their fastnesses, drove out the Afghan officers and led plundering forays all round. In a few years not a trace of Abdali's conquests was left on this side of the Indus. The Marathas had received a severe blow, but within ten years they were back in the north, acting as the guardians of the Mughal emperor Shah Alam whom they escorted from Allahabad to Delhi in 1771.

It is doubtful whether a Maratha victory at Panipat would have made much difference to the subsequent history of India. As a matter of fact, the Maratha polity was showing unmistakable signs of cracking up even before 1761. The basis of their home government was weak. The region of Maratha Swaraj was poor. It had no adequate sources of revenue to sustain an empire and so the government of the Peshwas had devised the policy of maintaining its armies on exactions and loot. India outside Swaraj or the Maratha homeland, was parcelled out among chiefs who were expected to levy contributions for their maintenance and for that of the central government. But the force at the disposal of the central government was not enough to curb the intransigence of the chiefs. Nor was there any other bind-

ing principle developed to keep them united. Loyalty to the king—the house of Shivaji—had been smothered by the transfer of power to the Peshwa. The Peshwa was a late-comer in the field and the ministers and military chiefs who were till recently his equals were jealous of his authority. In the circumstances, disunity and internal strife were inevitable. As early as 1738, when Raghoji Bhonsle was levying *chauth* in the eastern parts of the Mughal empire, he came into conflict with Peshwa Baji Rao I. Matters came to such a pass that the next Peshwa, Balaji Rao, at the behest of the Mughal emperor, agreed in 1743 to join Allahvardi Khan, the Nawab of Bengal, in chastising Bhonsle. The rivalry of Holkar and Sindhia appeared to be irreconcilable. Damaji Gaekwad had defied the Peshwa and Holkar's attitude was one of veiled hostility. In the post-Panipat days succession to the Peshwa's gaddi was not free from the threat of war among the claimants.

Maratha politics had assumed a shape in which a few families of big jagirdars and chiefs were seeking to set up independent principalities. In the political affairs the masses or classes had no part or lot. Nor did the Maratha leaders show any signs of higher statesmanship. They were greedy and grasping. They ground down the peasants and made no effort to win the goodwill of their subjects or dependant allies. They showed no interest in the welfare and cultural advancement of their own people.

The defeat of Panipat was not conclusive. The battle which was really decisive and from which revolutionary consequences flowed had already been fought four years before Panipat in the muddy mango grove of Plassey.

Before Ahmad Shah Abdali left India he had proclaimed Ali Gauhar, entitled Shah Alam II, emperor. But as Shah Alam was then absent from the capital, Najib-ud-Daulah acted as the chief administrator and regent in Delhi with Shahzada Jawan Bakht as the crown prince. Najib-ud-Daulah thus remained at the helm of affairs from 1761 to 1770. He was not only the regent of the emperor but also the deputy of Ahmad Shah Abdali. He had to restore order in the Mughal domain round Delhi and to prevent the Jats and the Sikhs from encroaching. He was successful against the Jats, killed Surajmal in battle and rendered his son incapable of challenging him. But he failed against the Sikhs who could not be subdued. The Phulkian Sikhs were, however, detached from the trans-Satluj chiefs.

IV. MARATHA QUARRELS AND THE FALL OF DELHI

By 1770 the Marathas had sufficiently recovered from the shock of Panipat to reappear in the north, and to re-establish their authority. The death of Najib at this juncture compelled Shah Alam to choose either the protection of the English with residence at Allahabad or a bid for the throne of Delhi with the aid of the Marathas. The Maratha Sardars made full use of the anxiety of the emperor to return to the capital. They entered into an agreement with him and promised to escort him to Delhi and restore him to the throne. Thus after twelve years of exile Shah Alam came back to the capital, the site and symbol of imperial power.

Even as a fugitive, Shah Alam had made several attempts to reassert his authority over Bihar and Bengal, but he was thwarted by the Nawab of Bengal. Curiously enough, on the day following the battle of Panipat, Shah Alam, unmindful of the fate of the empire, had fought a battle near the town of Bihar against an English force. He was defeated and had to sue for peace. Again three years later (1764) when the emperor and the Nawab of Oudh espoused the cause of the deposed Nawab Qasim Ali Khan (Mir Qasim), their combined arms met with disaster at Buxar. Thus Shah Alam became a British pensioner and Shuja-ud-Daulah their vassal. It was to end this humiliating dependence on a foreign power that Shah Alam accepted the protection of the Marathas and left Allahabad accompanied by them.

The Marathas were now in a position to exercise control over the affairs of Delhi. But after the death of the fourth Peshwa, Madhav Rao, in 1772, Poona was plunged in the inevitable disputes of succession. Raghunath Rao, the Peshwa's uncle, began plotting the deposition of Narayan Rao. He easily collected the support of the discontented elements. The councillors of the Peshwa were more or less indifferent concerning the fate of their master. The Gardis who guarded the palace were suborned. The Peshwa did not take any precautions and within nine months of assumption of office he was foully murdered.

A civil war ensued and Raghunath Rao (Raghoba) negotiated terms of armed help from the British. The pot was now on the fire. All the Maratha Sardars were involved in the quarrel. Their neighbours in the Deccan, the Nizam of Hyderabad and Haidar Ali of Mysore, took sides as their interests dictated; even the French

were drawn into the conflict. At last in 1783 the peace of Salbai put an end to the long war.

These years of commotion and tumult left little opportunity to the Maratha chiefs to pay attention to the affairs of the north. Delhi was left to itself and Najaf Khan, who had learnt the military arts in his association with the English in Bengal and who enjoyed their favour and support, became the effective ruler at Delhi. Although he had not the requisite ability to maintain the civil administration, he was able to keep together the remnants of the empire against the attacks of the enemies who surged round.

In 1782 Najaf Khan died. A dog fight ensued between his lieutenants for the regency, in which they wore themselves out and left the field open for the Marathas. Their chief, Mahadji Sindhia, free from the Deccan wars, was now in a position to look after the affairs of the north. The succession war had shaken the Maratha organisation to its roots, the authority of the Peshwa as the central link to a group of confederates was weakened and Sardars like Sindhia, Holkar, Gaekwad and Bhonsle, had become autonomous provincial rulers like the Mughal Subahdars of the Deccan, Bengal and Oudh. Mahadji's ambition was to play the role of the Mughal grandee of Delhi. The emperor was in search of relief from the intrigues and squabbles of Najaf Khan's lieutenants. He invited Mahadji to Delhi to take charge of the administration.

The British who were watching closely the affairs at Delhi and had their own designs were, however, not prepared then to plunge into the stormy waters. But a clash between the Marathas and the British to control the emperor was inevitable. More circumspect and resourceful than the Marathas, the British did not move forward without assurances regarding the financial, military and diplomatic implications of their plan. The Marathas, on the other hand, just rushed into the troubled affairs of Delhi heedless of expenditure, of the adequacy of the forces available, and of the reliability of allies. They were attracted by the glitter of the prize alone.

So Mahadji accepted the emperor's invitation. He presented himself before the emperor in his camp near Fatehpur Sikri, placed his head on the emperor's feet and paid a *nazar* of 101 gold muhars. The emperor conferred upon him the office of regent (Vakil-i-Mutlaq), which combined the functions of the prime minister

(Wazir) and the commander-in-chief (Mir Bakhshi).[1] The superior claim of the Peshwa was ignored. Mahadji's ambition was fulfilled. He had captured the highest post in the Mughal empire. It was within his power to appoint and dismiss the governors of provinces and the highest officials, to award jagirs and to levy tribute. He was the deputy of the emperor and next to him the highest dignitary in the state.

But in fact Mahadji had purchased a worthless bauble at a very high price. He had to maintain a considerable force at the cost of ten lakhs of rupees a month and he had to find funds for it from a shrunken empire several times overrun and plundered. The imperial writ hardly ran beyond the districts of Delhi and Agra, and even here much of the royal domain had been given away or usurped by people who refused to pay even legitimate dues without the use of force. What was worse, enemies pressed upon him from every direction and from within. The Mughal nobles conspired and rebelled against him. The fickle and faithless emperor did not render consistent support. In the Peshwa's court the influence of Nana Phadnavis worked against him and the government at home, which ought to have fully sustained its general in the field, "had neither the will nor the money necessary for backing Mahadji in his hour of need."[2] The Raja of Jaipur refused to pay the stipulated tribute and sent his agent to Lucknow to seek the help of the English. Mahadji was forced to take action, but the defection of the Mughal troops, on account of long standing arrears of pay and threat of starvation, placed him in an awkward position He failed to reduce the Raja to submission.

The Mughal Amirs led by Ghulam Qadir Rohilla took advantage of Mahadji's predicament. The vacillating Shah Alam was deposed, tortured and then blinded But Mahadji had meanwhile recovered from his repulse at Lalsot and re-occupied Delhi. He restored the blind emperor to the throne, and determined to rebuild the machinery of administration and to subdue the unruly barons and landlords in order to organise the collection of revenue and funds to meet the incessant demands of the troops and of the Peshwa's government.

But Mahadji had many enemies who obstructed him—the

[1] This was much resented in the Peshwa's court when Sindhia explained that he was acting merely as the Peshwa's deputy.

[2] Sarkar, Jadunath, *Fall of the Mughal Empire*, Vol III, p 282

Afghans, the Rohillas, the Mughal nobility, the princes of Rajasthan, and the disorderly condottieri who revelled in fishing in troubled waters. Among the Maratha Sardars, Holkar was his rival and Nana Phadnavis was jealous of his growing prestige and influence. Nana Phadnavis devised a Machiavellian plan to restrain Mahadji. He distributed the northern territories between Sindhia, Holkar and Ali Bahadur, the representative of the Peshwa, for the collection of tribute. The amount of tribute from each of them was kept purposely so high that no one could realise his share fully, and thus all the three were kept perpetually wrangling.

Mahadji's reaction against his enemies and their plotting was to raise an overwhelming force which would be capable of maintaining peace and order and of realising tribute and land revenue. This force was supplied by De Boigne, who joined his service in 1784. He raised an army whose strength ultimately reached 39,000 men. It was mainly an infantry corps, trained on the French model, strengthened with artillery units and equipped with guns and muskets manufactured in foundries under European supervision.

With this new force Mahadji swept the field and won decisive victories over all his foes including his rival Holkar. By 1793 he had reached the zenith of his power. His name and fame were unsurpassed among the Marathas. But his triumph was short-lived, for within less than two years his earthly career came to an end. His death deprived the Marathas of their last great soldier-statesman.

A period of utter confusion followed. Feuds broke out on all sides. Mahadji's adopted son Daulat Rao and his step-mothers quarrelled. The civil and military officers of Sindhia who belonged to different Brahmana sub-castes—Deshastha and Shenvi—intrigued against one another. Tukoji Holkar's sons began a fratricidal fight for the patrimony of their father. The young Peshwa Madhav Rao II's death started quarrels regarding succession in which the Maratha Sardars took opposite sides.

In the civil war that followed the principals were Yashwant Rao Holkar and Daulat Rao Sindhia. Nana Phadnavis, after much vacillation and many vain attempts to keep the son of his sworn enemy Raghoba out, ultimately espoused his cause. A bloody war between Chhatrapati Shivaji, Raja of Kolhapur, and the Patwardhan chief Parashuram Bhau, created additional complications. The campaigns of the contending armies devastated the country. Villages

were trampled under the hoofs of their horses, towns were plundered and sacked, the rich were tortured on the rack, and the poor suffered untold miseries. Anarchy spread over the Maratha homeland.

This war of all against all was a godsend for the British. They were engaged in a life and death struggle with Napoleon who had dashed across the Mediterranean, defeated the Turks under the pyramids, and crossed into Syria. His agents were busy rousing Russia and the eastern countries against the British and Tipu Sultan was known to be in correspondence with him. At this juncture the British Government sent the Wellesley brothers to India to safeguard their interests.

Immediately on assuming office in Calcutta, Wellesley started negotiations with the Marathas in order to ensnare them into his system of subsidiary alliances. The Peshwa did not give any heed to these overtures at first. But he was compelled to accept British protection when Yashwant Rao Holkar defeated him (1802) and drove him out of Poona. He fled to Bassein and signed the treaty which made him a dependant of the British.

Thus the central Maratha state ceased to exist. But the Maratha Sardars were still strong. Fortunately for the British even in their dire predicament, the Marathas could not unite to save the remnants of their power. Against such folly fate was inexorable. Sindhia and Holkar fought the British separately and each in turn suffered crushing defeats.

Mahadji Sindhia, before leaving for the Deccan, had made suitable arrangements for the administration of the empire. He had appointed Shah Nizam-ud-Din, the head of the order of the Chishtis in Delhi, as regent and divided the territories of Delhi into six districts for the purpose of land-revenue. Unfortunately, the prolonged absence of the Sindhia from Delhi, the jealousies of the Maratha officials, the faithlessness of European commanders, the harshness and greed of the regent, and the depredations of adventurers, made the life of the emperor and the people miserable beyond description.

When Wellesley declared war upon Daulat Rao, the British armies rapidly closed in upon the Maratha forces in the north and in the Deccan. Lake, the commander of the northern group, marched to Aligarh and routed Sindhia's forces under Perron. Then he marched on to Delhi which he entered on September 16, 1803.

Emperor Shah Alam passed under British protection, and the Mughal empire virtually ceased to exist.

In the Deccan, Arthur Wellesley (the future Duke of Wellington) destroyed the forces of the Sindhia and Bhonsle at Assaye and Argaon respectively, and then captured the fortress of Gawilgarh. By the treaties of Deogaon and Sarji-Anjangaon, Bhonsle and Sindhia signed away their independence. Thus vanished Shivaji's dream of *Hindu Pad Padshahi.*

CHAPTER TWO

SOCIAL ORGANISATION IN THE EIGHTEENTH CENTURY

I. CHARACTERISTICS OF INDIAN HISTORY

Babar founded the Mughal empire early in the sixteenth century. His brilliant and forceful successors expanded it over a vast area, so that at the death of Aurangzeb its boundaries marched in the north with the Karakoram mountains and the Oxus river, and reached down to the Kaveri river in the south. From west to east the empire lay between the kingdoms of Persia and Burma. The Mughals thus ruled over territories larger in extent than any empire before or after them.

This vast empire enjoyed fame for pomp and splendour, for wealth and culture, unparalleled in those times. Its system of government and administration guaranteed peace and order over a vast region and it offered unique opportunities of advancement in arts and letters. Its achievements constitute a brilliant chapter in the history of world civilisations. But this wonderful edifice did not enjoy a long span of life. From its foundations at Panipat in 1526 to Nadir Shah's shattering invasion in 1739, an interval of 213 years elapsed during which the empire lasted. The duration of the Mughal empire was not long, but the empires in India were usually short-lived. The Mauryas lasted for less than a century and a half. The Satavahanas established their empire in the middle of the first century B.C. and extended their sway over the Deccan "from sea to sea", but the total period of their dominion was less than three centuries. The Guptas ruled for about two hundred years. Some regional kingdoms like the Cholas in the south and the Palas of Bengal lasted longer, probably because of their sheltered position. Otherwise, ordinarily, the kingdoms and empires in India both in ancient times and the Middle Ages were short-lived.

During the entire stretch of history from the Vedic times to the end of the eighteenth century, India never enjoyed continuous political unity for more than two centuries at a time. Ashoka's all-India dominion broke up almost immediately after his death. The territories annexed by Samudra Gupta in the fourth century were lost by the time of Buddha Gupta by the end of the fifth century when the

Huna invaders from the north-west shattered the Gupta power. The empire of the Khaljis barely lasted thirty years (A.D. 1290-1320). The authority of the Tughlaqs was repudiated in Bengal and the Deccan before the death of Muhammad Tughlaq (1351). The imperial structure of the Mughals was in ruins within half a century of Aurangzeb's death. The history of India is thus the story of the rise and fall of empires and of the chaos that intervened between the fall of one and the founding of the next.

Another important fact about Indian history is that the venue of the empires and the centre of gravity of the political systems were not fixed. The seat of power of the Mauryas and the Guptas was in eastern India; the Satavahanas ruled from the Deccan; the Gurjara-Pratiharas had their capital at Kanauj; the Cholas belonged to southern India, and the medieval Sultans and the Mughals exercised their sway from Delhi or Agra. This lack of centrality is in marked contrast with conditions in Europe. For instance in England, France and Italy the states crystallised round specific centres—London, Paris and Rome.

Although no one part of India played a dominant centralising role continuously, it remains true that the Indian midlands (Dhruva Madhya Desh)—the region between the Saraswati and the Sadanira rivers, and the Himalayas and the Vindhya mountains, enjoyed a special prestige in political and cultural life throughout the ages. For this region was in the ancient times the home of the dynasties of Suryavanshi and Chandra-vanshi kings—of Rama, Bharata and Janaka, and of the medieval empires of the Turks and the Mughals. It was the land of the sacred rivers—Ganga, Jamuna and Saraswati—and of places of pilgrimage—Hardwar, Mathura, Ayodhya, Prayag and Kashi. Here grew and blossomed some of the great Indian languages —Sanskrit, Pali, Braj and Urdu—and here flourished the religions of the Buddha and Mahavira and the movements of *bhakti* and Sufism.

The midlands was the centre from which cultural influences radiated to all the regions of India. But this cultural focus failed to attract and hold the peoples of India together in an organic socio-political unity.

Why India failed to develop into a single social organism and why its political structure remained unstable are problems which need consideration. Without understanding them, the British

conquest of India in the eighteenth century and the attainment of India's freedom nearly two hundred years thereafter cannot be explained. It is necessary, therefore, to analyse the peculiar conditions prevailing in India on the eve of the conquest which facilitated the establishment of British dominion.

Now both in the building up of a civilisation and its break-down, man and nature have a part to play. Between the two, however, nature's role is subordinate to that of man. Nature provides opportunities which it is the privilege of man to avail of. It offers challenges which seek appropriate responses. When man makes use of what nature offers he forges ahead and climbs from one stage to another; in the contrary case, he either remains in a static state or the system which he laboriously builds up in the course of history, breaks down and eventually disintegrates. But the rise and fall of societies and of civilisations is not governed by any iron law of necessity. So far as one can see, man is the architect of his own destiny, however much man's powers may be limited by natural factors. Social, economic and political systems are the product of man's creative use of nature's resources.

Although it is impossible in the present state of knowledge to unravel the tangled web of multiple causation in a scientific manner, yet it is not possible to remain satisfied with merely narrating the events of the past and ignoring their concatenation or the relations of cause and effect among them. A beginning towards the understanding of history requires an assessment of the influence of these factors.

If Indian history, as all history, is the record of the interplay of mind and nature, it becomes necessary to evaluate the contribution of the different factors which have moulded the events of the eighteenth century, and a beginning has to be made with the physical environment which provided both stimuli and obstructions to human endeavours.

II THE LAND

India is not a country in the nineteenth-century meaning of that geographical term. In size, it has to be placed in the same category as Soviet Russia, China, Australia, Canada and the United States of America. In population it is the largest country of the world next to China.

Its geographical features make it an epitome of the world. For all climates, almost every type of land and water, most species of animals and plants, many kinds of minerals, and a number of human races are found within its boundaries.

The country is naturally divided into four parts—the Himalayan region, the region of the northern plains, the central uplands, and the Deccan with the eastern, western and southern littorals.

The Himalayan region is the home of perpetual snow. Within its folds nestles the enchanting valley of Kashmir, which the Mughals called "paradise on earth", and numerous hill states, some of them tiny and picturesque, and others like Sikkim, Bhutan and Nepal inhabited by sturdy and warlike races with the mountaineer's love of freedom.

The region of the northern plains which stretches from the Arabian Sea to the Bay of Bengal is the gift of the great rivers whose sources lie in the snowy Himalayas. The fertile Panjab is irrigated by the river system of the Indus. Cold in winter and hot in summer, its dry and bracing climate and scanty to moderate rainfall make it a land of hardy peasants and of agricultural plenty. A great part of Rajasthan is a desert, a sea of billowing yellow sand, where water is scarce and to eke out a living difficult. But Rajasthan has reared the proud Rajput race, jealous of the honour of their clan and tribe, hospitable and generous to a fault, loyal to their chiefs, brave to the point of recklessness, but lazy and incapable of concerted action.

The midlands is a riverain country situated between the Aravalis and the Rajmahal hills. It is the basin into which the surplus waters of the Himalayas from the north and of the Vindhyas from the south drain. They bring with them the rich alluvium which has filled the midlands trough and given it a soil several thousand feet deep. The fleet-footed Ganga after breaking out from the Himalayan gorges moves majestically through the fat fertile soil receiving tributaries from the right and the left, till it turns southwards to embrace the wide expanse of the Bay of Bengal. It is a warm land. Though the winter is mild, during the summer months the sun's rays beat pitilessly upon the parched earth. Then dark clouds begin to gather from south-east and south-west in June and the rains come to quench the thirst of the land and to cover the earth with luscious green.

The midlands has been the seat of Indian culture, both in ancient times and in the Middle Ages. Its languages have had the

widest acceptance. It has been famous for literature and art. The heroic exploits of its kings and the saintly deeds of its pious men are embodied in legend, story, ballad and song which constitute a precious heritage of all India. Along the banks of its rivers arose cities which became centres of power and retreats which gave shelter to seekers of knowledge and truth.

As the Ganga sweeps round the Rajmahal hills it enters into the deltaic plain of Bengal. The Ganga, Brahmaputra and Meghna, which flow lazily through the land, are heavily laden with detritus which they drag along. It is deposited in huge mud-banks and the river spreads out fanwise, its branches forming the ribs. Bengal is a steamy plain, hot and humid, with copious rains and innumerable streams and reservoirs of water. Vegetation is luxuriant and life easy. "Golden Bengal" is endowed with nature's bounties in a larger measure than most other parts of India.

The land begins to rise from the southern edge of the Gangetic trough till it reaches the escarpment of the Kaimur-Vindhyan chains. This elevated region forms the uplands of central India and comprises from the west to the east the territories of Malwa, Bundelkhand and Baghelkhand. In the east the Kaimur-Maikal range separates this region from Chhota Nagpur and Orissa, and in the west the Chambal river and the Aravali hills from Rajputana and Gujarat. The Vindhyas, which rise in a gentle slope from the Gangetic plain towards their crest, fall precipitately on the southern face. At the foot of the scarp lies the narrow bed of the Narbada. The river is fed by the springs of Amarkantak. It rushes through the gorge of the marble rocks near Jabalpur and then wends its placid way through forests and hills to the sea. The course of the Narbada is marked by highly picturesque scenery and along its banks were built in ancient times numerous hermitages, temples and shrines. Travellers, intent upon reaching ports on the western sea-coast, followed the Vindhyas from Pataliputra to Broach by way of Chitrakut, Bhilsa and Ujjain. Those that wanted to enter the Deccan had to negotiate the passes and then cross over the river. The Narbada's munificence has enfolded it in a vesture of sanctity almost as great as that of the holy Ganga.

The Narbada is the northern limit of the Deccan plateau, which extends wedgewise into the far south. It is flanked by the Eastern and Western Ghats. The Eastern Ghats are a series of low, sprawling

hills with large gaps in between. The broad plain between the Ghats and the Bay of Bengal forms the sea front of Orissa, Andhra and Tamilnad. The coast is fringed with mangrove swamps and sand dunes. Between them are scattered deltas formed by the rivers forging their silt-laden waters through the gaps of the Ghats. The important ones among them are the deltas of the Mahanadi, Godavari, Krishna and Kaveri. There are a few inlets in the delta creeks, otherwise the coast is open to the battering of the monsoons and cyclones which are frequent in the Bay. As the sea-shore is shallow, harbourage and protection for large ocean-going vessels is not adequate. But the coastal plains are fertile and the supply of water, both from rain and river, is sufficient to make it a rich rice-growing area, specially in the north, in Orissa, and the northern districts of Andhra. Southwards the monsoons reach the country late and rainfall diminishes in volume. Tanks and spring channels are employed for irrigation. The toddy and palmyra palms and casuarinas flourish on the sandy soil and in the salt sea air.

While Orissa has existed through the centuries in isolation from the mainstreams of India's past, Andhra and Tamilnad have been keen participants in the stir and bustle of the country's history. These regions were the scene of the operations of the Satavahanas, the Chalukyas, the Cholas, the Kakatiyas, the Vijayanagar empire and the Bahmani kingdoms. The southern section of the coast provided *entrepôts* for the world trade between the East and the West, where Roman, Arab, Persian, Malayan and Chinese merchants met on their journeys from one direction to the other.

The western littoral is narrow. The mountain chain, which constitutes its spine, is almost continuous from the Sahyadri to the Nilgiris and beyond. It throws up summits up to 5,000 feet in elevation and in the case of the Nilgiris the Doddabetta reaches a height of over 8,700 feet. The western littoral includes a number of regions—Kachh and Kathiawar, Gujarat, Konkan, Kanara, and Kerala. Kachh is a sea-girt island, and Kathiawar a peninsula joined to the mainland by a narrow neck of land. Gujarat is an extension of the Malwa plateau, an intrusion of the Indo-Gangetic conditions into the peninsula. The Konkan is a coastal lowland which is thirty to fifty miles broad and stretches from Khandesh to Goa. It is broken by hills and dominated by the steep cliffs of the Western Ghats. The Ghats are a rugged series of flat-topped spurs intersected by deep

ravines. The spurs are natural forts and were utilised as such by the Marathas during their struggle against the Mughals.

Intermediate between Konkan and Kerala is the coastal strip of Kanara. It is badly cut up by the rapid streams which rush down the Ghats to the sea. Their valleys offer opportunities for cultivation, otherwise the forests nourished by copious rains and infested with malaria cover the hills. But the forest is rich with teak and sandalwood.

Kerala is the southernmost part of the western coast. The Nilgiris in the north and the Anaimalai and Cardamom hills in the south are a barrier which separate Kerala from the rest of the country. This is breached by the gap of Palghat between the Nilgiris and the Anaimalais. From the hills, streams flow into the sea forming little deltas on the mouth and offering roadsteads for sea craft. Otherwise lagoons and backwaters fleck the coast and waterways provide the means of communication.

The western coast, especially the Ghats, is the wettest region of India after Assam. It has numerous anchorages and harbours along its length, and it looks westwards—towards the ancient centres of civilisation in the Persian Gulf and the Red Sea, and in more recent times round the southern tip of Africa towards Europe.

Between the Eastern and Western Ghats, and south of the line of the Satpura, Maikal and Hazaribagh ranges, lies the geologically ancient land mass of the Indian peninsula known as the Deccan. The peninsula is triangular in shape. Its base is the broad northern plateau which is divided by a vertical line between the Marathi-speaking people in the west, the Hindi-speaking people in the middle and the Telugu-speaking people in the east. Below lies the middle plateau. It contains regions of Kannada, Telugu and Tamil speech. The southern part again has two divisions—Malayalam is the language of the west and Tamil of the east.

The Maharashtra country includes parts of the Deccan uplands, the Western Ghats and the Konkan sea-coast. Each of them has its peculiarities of soil, climate and products. The upland soil is mainly non-alluvial. The monsoon clouds largely empty themselves over the Ghats leaving only twenty to thirty inches of rain as the annual share of the Deccan. Among the crops millets predominate and *jowar* and *bajra* are the mainstay of the diet of the hardy and frugal Maratha peasantry.

The Andhra or Telangana part of the plateau is quite different. It is characterised by eroded plains, broad, open valleys, heaps of rocks and boulders, a poor, sandy soil and moderate rainfall. In contrast with Marathawada, Telangana is a plain of poor vegetation; trees are few and grasses thin and coarse.

The Hindi-speaking part of northern Deccan consists of the old Dakshina Koshala or Gondwana, viz. the wild hill and forest region bordering on Orissa.

The middle belt of the Deccan tableland consists of the Mysore plateau, southern Andhra and northern Tamilnad. The Mysore plateau has an elevation of 1,500 to 4,000 feet above sea level, and it contains the head-waters of the Tungabhadra and Kaveri rivers and their many affluents. The rainfall is modest, 25 to 35 inches during the year, and cultivation depends largely on tank irrigation.

Below Mysore the apex of the triangular peninsula narrows down sharply. Its two sides are the alluvial plains of Kerala and Tamilnad and in the middle arise the uplands formed by the Nilgiri, Anaimalai, Cardamom and Palni hills. The precipitation of rain over the hills is abundant. They are naturally covered with tropical forests, and among them the blue eucalyptus in the Nilgiris is conspicuous and is responsible for the name of the hills.

The Deccan highlands make a great contrast with the fertile lowlands of the north and the eastern and western coastlands. The hilly nature of the terrain, poorness of the soil, marginal character of the rainfall, abundance of forests in some parts and deficiency of vegetation in others, are forbidding features. They do not allow a life of ease and plenty. Indian civilisations have, therefore, flourished in the lowlands surrounding the Deccan, in the Indo-Gangetic plains, in the deltas of the rivers flowing into the Bay of Bengal or the Gulf of Cambay, and in the Malabar and Coromandel coastlands. From these hives of culture people have penetrated into the highlands of the Deccan and brought parts of them within the orbits of their special cultures. They drove the original inhabitants into the forest lands and mountain fastnesses where they dwell even today.

The diversity of India's geographical features is striking. The country is divided into many regions with different climates, soils, rainfalls, temperatures, and features of land and water. The vastness of territory, the primitiveness of the means of communication and transport, and the comparatively low density of population were

factors which in the past accentuated the isolation of the regions. So long as such conditions lasted it was difficult for the consciousness of a social community to appear.

Nevertheless, there are similarities which underlie these differences. These are the gift of the mountains and the seas which girdle the country. The Himalayas are a powerful factor in giving to India as a whole a sub-tropical monsoonish climate, with the alternation of seasons—winter, summer and rains—all well marked and predictable. The seas and the semi-circular wall of the mountains in the north provide a framework within which life proceeded without much intrusion from the outside. The result was that although State and society did not achieve organic unity, in the field of culture common ways and attitudes were evolved and common features developed.

The challenge of geography has been met today by the victory of science and invention over nature. Man is now able to overcome physical obstacles including the intransigence of space. The knowledge of nature has helped in subjugating the natural forces to the purposes of man. The obstacles offered by mountains, rivers, forests and climate have been overcome and geographical diversities have yielded to man's will for unity.

But all these developments are recent and India came to benefit from them only in the nineteenth century. Previously the geographical diversities imposed upon the inhabitants conditions in which coalescence and integration were difficult and centrifugal forces held almost unchecked sway.

Today science has placed at man's service tremendous power. But up to the end of the eighteenth century the power available was largely all that man or animal could contribute. Man's productive ability in agriculture and industry was dependent upon them. Intercourse between territorial divisions and administrative control by the centre were limited.

Particularism, localism and regionalism were, therefore, stronger than universalism or nationalism. Although nature had provided a physical framework which could accommodate—and indeed pointed towards—a distinctive culture and an integral social organism, lack of technical knowledge to overcome the disruptive geographical forces kept in abeyance the evolution of social and political unity.

The immense barriers which separated India from her neighbours

were a powerful factor which made for the growth of a distinctive type of individuality and differentiated the cultures of India from those of the other lands. But regional diversities prevented the processes of assimilation to achieve all-India cultural unity and social solidarity.

III THE PEOPLE

In the history of a people the role of the geographical factor is important. But that of the human factor is even more so. Attitudes of mind, ideas, sentiments, character, ways and manners, give form to institutions and direct a people's progress through time. The languages the Indians speak today, their religious beliefs and forms of worship, their social organisation and aesthetic expression, all bear the stamp of their traditions. For instance, beginning from the utterances of the Upanishads in the seventh century B.C. to the teachings of Gandhi in the twentieth century A.D., there runs an unbroken chain of mental attitudes and ethical drives. But overlying this unity and identity, there is variety, too, for India is the home of a multiplicity of languages, races, religions and customs. The diversity is as patent and as striking as the similarity of certain attributes of culture. One of the sources of this variety is the composition of India's population.

The inhabitants of India are a mixture of several races. Some of them have lived in the country so long that they may be regarded as indigenous; others migrated from abroad in historical times. They have intermingled and produced a number of different types. The migration of races into India offers instructive contrasts with the immigrations into Europe. What is common to both is the movement of the Aryan-speaking peoples. In Europe there were three waves of these migrations. The first immigrants settled down in the Balkans and Italy, and in the western, central and eastern regions, after displacing or assimilating the inhabitants who were already there. But in the third century a second wave of migrants from beyond the boundaries of the Roman Empire began to exert pressure, and Celts, Teutons, Vandals, Goths, Wends or Slavs and other warlike tribes dashed against the Roman fortified frontiers till at last they gave way and the barbarian flood overwhelmed the great empire.

The settlement of these tribes in the different regions of Europe gave rise to new societies which were established in the regions

occupied by the earlier Aryan tribes. They established tribal chieftaincies and ruled over the land with the help of their well-born companions who were attached to them by sentiments of personal loyalty. By the very nature of their organisation they were driven to war, conquest and expansion.

The movement affected every region. To England came the Angles and Saxons; to France, the Franks; to Spain, the Visi-Goths; to northern Italy, the Lombards; to the Netherlands, the Belgae; and to the Balkan lands, the Ostro-Goths. From their settlements a new Europe arose, a Europe in which *Pax Romana* gave place to incessant tribal wars.

But from the sixth century the areas of peace began to enlarge. The tribes settled down and became consolidated. The Christian religion and Latin culture spread. In the eighth century Charles the Great established an empire which recalled memories of the Roman Empire, and in the east Constantinople became the capital of another empire which exercised suzerainty over the greater part of Asia Minor.

Then this second Europe suffered a catastrophic revolution. The wild and ferocious heathen Northmen from Scandinavian countries, the warlike Magyar nomads from the East, and the civilised Muslims of northern Africa appeared upon the scene.

The Northmen—Norwegians, Swedes and Danes—led conquering raids into Britain and the Frankish empire. They were daring and skilful sea-men, and entering through the estuaries of rivers and riding upon the streams they penetrated into the heart of the kingdoms. The Magyars, whose swift horses and unerring archery swept everything before them, crossed the Carpathians and devastated central Germany and northern Italy. In the end they settled down in Hungary, driving a wedge between the northern and southern Slavs.

The Muslims, who had brought the whole of northern Africa under the dominion of the Caliph, crossed into Spain early in the eighth century and overrunning the peninsula entered southern France. They also pressed upon the lands of the Byzantine empire.

The incursions and migrations of the ninth and tenth centuries had a profound effect upon Europe. The disruption of governments—Anglo-Saxon in Britain, Carlovingian in Europe—accentuated the

problems of security of life and property. A bipolar society of the protectors and the protected, of lords and serfs, tied together with a military land tenure, feudal agreements and obligations, arose out of the ashes of the second Europe. By the eleventh century the third Europe was ushered into existence. It enjoyed unbroken and continuous evolution till it blossomed into the modern Europe of nation states.

The history of India has been different. Before the Aryans started arriving in India, the country was sparsely populated and dense forests covered large areas of the northern plains and the plateaus. The inhabitants of these regions spoke different languages and possessed different physical features. Their languages belonged to Mongol, Australoid and Dravidian families.

The Aryan migrations took place in the second millennium before Christ. It is not quite certain where the Aryans came from. Various sections of the vast territory between the lower Danube and the upper reaches of the Oxus claim to be their original home. Nor is it possible to say positively what routes they followed in their wanderings.

They entered India through the valleys of the rivers which flow from the west into the Indus. For a long time they stayed on the banks of the Saraswati, which has a special sanctity in their sacred literature. As they moved from the north-western and western regions, their tribes and clans established small kingdoms in the Indo-Gangetic plains. But as they advanced further from their original home their numbers diminished and mass migrations dwindled into conquering expeditions, each led by a small group. Ultimately the supremacy of the Aryan culture was established all over India.

In each region the admixture of the cultures of the Aryans and the indigenes produced a special pattern. In the Indo-Gangetic plains the Panjab and Rajasthan became the habitat of peoples having common physical features and speaking the Panjabi and Rajasthani dialects. The higher castes inhabiting the midlands and Bihar have a similar physical make-up, but the lower castes are different. The languages spoken in this region are various dialects of Hindi (Western and Eastern).

In Bengal the physical type of the masses shows admixture with the Mongolian race, but their language—Bengali—belongs to the Aryan family.

The central uplands—Gujarat, Malwa, Bundelkhand and Baghelkhand—are inhabited by peoples with medium heads and short stature. The language of Gujarat is akin to Rajasthani, but in the central parts, the Malavi, Bundeli and Bagheli dialects of Hindi are spoken. Chhota Nagpur is a broken hilly country, intersected by deep ravines and strewn with forests. The population consists of a large number of non-Aryan tribes with their own tribal organisations and languages. Among them the Santhals, the Mundas, the Oraons, the Hos and the Gonds are prominent. Some of the languages are Dravidian and others Australoid or Munda dialects. The physical features of the tribal people are a medium head and a broad nose.

In the Deccan the eastern side is divided into three regions—Orissa, Andhra and Tamilnad. The language of the people of Orissa is akin to Bengali. The Andhras speak Telugu, which is a Dravidian speech. The Tamils who occupy the southern parts of the peninsula are divided into two distinct types which differ in the shape and size of the head and the features of the face. But both use the Tamil language.

The western side of the Deccan contains Maharashtra, Karnatak (Coorg, Mysore, Kanara), and the Malabar coast. The language of the Maharashtrians is Aryan, but in their physical features they differ from the people of the Panjab and Rajasthan.

The Kannada-speaking people resemble the Maharashtrians. Among them also there are differences between the higher and lower castes. The Kannada language is Dravidian with a large admixture of Aryan words.

The inhabitants of Malabar are long-headed and resemble the Tamils in their physical traits. The higher castes, Nambudiri Brahmanas and Nairs, are taller and fairer than the lower castes and tribes.

Telugu, Tamil, Kannada and Malayalam are branches of the Dravidian family of languages. Their speakers constitute the second largest group after the speakers of the Aryan languages.

The distribution of population in India shows two things. In the first place geographical divisions correspond with ethnic types, as if the mixing of earlier and later inhabitants had produced, in the then more or less isolated conditions, special types where each type developed its special language. Each region, with its particular speech, has maintained some sort of individuality through the ages.

As early as the thirteenth century Amir Khusrau shows an awareness of these linguistic divisions. He mentions eleven languages. Three of them are Dravidian—Dhur Samudri (Kanarese), Tilangi (Telugu), and Mabari (Tamil); and seven are northern Aryan—Sindhi, Kashmiri, Gujarati, Gauri (Western Bengali), Bangala (Eastern Bengali), Awadhi (Eastern Hindi), Dehlawi (Western Hindi) and Kubri (not identified).

Abul Fazl takes note of ten Indian languages: Kashmiri, Sindhi, Multani (Western Panjabi), Dehlawi (Hindi), Bengali, Marwari (Rajasthani), Gujarati, Marathi, Telugu and Kannada.

In the sixteenth century, Akbar organised the provinces of his empire on what must have appeared to him the natural lines. The Indus plain was divided into Multan and Thattah. The Panjab with its capital at Lahore formed a province. Ajmer stood for Rajasthan; Delhi, Agra, Oudh and Allahabad covered the midlands. The easternmost plain was formed into the province of Bengal which included Bihar. The only part of the central uplands which was included in the empire was Malwa, for Bundelkhand and Baghelkhand had remained independent. The western Deccan plateau and its coastal lands were divided into the provinces of Ahmadabad (Gujarat), Khandesh and Berar.

Aurangzeb redistributed the provinces and divided the empire into twenty-one administrative divisions. They corresponded closely to the natural and linguistic divisions of India. The provinces of Multan and Lahore formed the two parts of the Panjab speaking the two branches of Panjabi. The other linguistic provinces were Thattah, speaking Sindhi; Ajmer, speaking Rajasthani; Delhi, Agra, Allahabad and Oudh, speaking Hindi; Bihar, Bengal and Orissa, speaking Bihari, Bengali and Oriya; Malwa and the central uplands, speaking Malavi; Gujarat, speaking Gujarati, and Khandesh, Berar, Bidar and Bijapur, speaking Marathi.

Thus the distinctive character of the regional peoples and their languages was recognised throughout history.

Behind these divisions, however, lay an unconscious acknowledgement of unity. It is true that the inhabitants of the different regions were mixtures of various elements, but one element in different degrees was common to almost all, that is, the Aryan. Aryan families, clans and tribes in varying numbers had settled in the different regions of the country and had imprinted their stamp upon the regional populations.

The language of the Aryans was the basis of all languages except the Dravidian and the minor dialects, for example, Munda. But even the non-Aryan languages were suffused with Aryan elements. What is more, the content of the literatures of the various languages was in a large measure similar, for all of them drew their inspiration from the literature in Sanskrit. Religious beliefs and practices and the social systems of all the regions bore undisputed marks of Aryan influence.

Once the Indo-Aryans had settled down in India and spread their language, religion and social ways over the country, varieties of culture sprang up in each region under the influence of the particular type of its mixed people. Notwithstanding their differences these varieties had many attributes in common.

Contrary to what happened in Europe, no subsequent movements of tribes on a large scale disturbed the regional settlements, or the character of the peoples and their cultures. Not that foreigners did not immigrate into India in later ages, but these later arrivals were not in such large numbers as to affect radically the composition of the regional populations.

After the advent of the Aryans the Shakas (Scythians), the Yuechis and the Hunas came to India. Some historians believe that the Jats and Gujars, who are thickly scattered over the north-western regions of the Indo-Gangetic plain, are their descendants. It is also the view of many writers that the Rajputs owe their origin to these foreign tribes. Their tribal names are not known to history before the sixth century, that is, previous to the establishment of the Huna empire in India, and their sudden rise to prominence in the sixth century raises a presumption in favour of this view.

But whatever the truth of the theory of the foreign origin of these tribes, it is undeniable that their numbers do not indicate any large displacement of the original inhabitants or any considerable modification of the pattern of cultural systems or socio-economic structures in any region.

The figures at the end of the nineteenth century (vide *Census of India Report,* 1901) give us some indication of their numbers. In Rajputana the Rajputs were 6.4 per cent of the total population, the Jats 8·7 per cent and the Gujars 4·8 per cent; in the Panjab the Rajputs were 7·4 per cent, the Jats 19·5 per cent (this number includes Muslim, Hindu and Sikh Jats), and the Gujars 1·5 per cent.

In Uttar Pradesh, which is another important centre of these tribes, the distribution was: Rajputs 8·3 per cent, Jats 1·9 per cent and Gujars ·69 per cent.

The absolute numbers, according to the same report, of the Rajputs, the Jats and the Gujars in these provinces were as follows: Rajputana, ·62 million Rajputs, ·85 million Jats and ·46 million Gujars, out of a total population of 9·7 million; Panjab, 1·9 million Rajputs, 5 million Jats, and ·74 million Gujars, out of a total population of 24·8 million; Uttar Pradesh, 3·4 million Rajputs and ·78 million Gujars, out of 46·67 million inhabitants.

Regarding the racial character of the three groups, scholars are agreed that they belong to the same Aryan physical stock. Although Gurjaras have given their name to a number of places in the Panjab, Uttar Pradesh and western India, their earliest kingdom was founded in the Jodhpur state. From here they spread to Uttar Pradesh and established the Gurjara-Pratihara empire. The combination indicates the identity of the Gujars with the Pratihara Rajputs. Some of the clan names of the Gujars are the same as those of the Rajputs and they have the same physical features.

So far as the Jats are concerned, they are included among the thirty-six ancient clans of the Rajputs. The Jats themselves claim that they are descended from the Yadus (a Rajput tribe). Ibbetson says, "it is at least exceedingly probable, both from their almost identical physique and facial character and from the close communion which has always existed between them, that they belong to one and the same ethnic stock."[1]

It seems probable that originally the three groups belonged to the same race. The record of the degradation of the Rajputs into the lower ranks of the Jats and of the elevation of Jats into Rajputs shows their kinship. It is also known that the caste system was not so immutable in the past as it is today, and it is likely that the numbers of the three groups have been swollen as a result of the assimilation of other groups.

It appears, therefore, that the Rajputs, Gujars and Jats are identical in race and that their differences are more social than ethnic. Their numbers and their percentages in the population point to the probability that they entered India in small groups and therefore

[1] Ibbetson, D, *Panjab Castes*, Lahore, 1916 (Part III, *The Jat, Rajput and Allied Castes*), p. 100

failed to bequeath their peculiar physical features (if any) to their descendants.

There are, however, weighty arguments which militate against the view that they belong to the stock of immigrants who entered India in the wake of the Scythians (the Kushans who carved out an empire in India in the first and second centuries A.D.) or the Hunas who invaded India in the fifth century.

So far as the Kushans are concerned their home was on the other side of the Indus in the Kabul valley and Trans-Oxiana. Their kings established their rule over Kashmir and north-western India, but history does not record their settlement in large numbers in any region of India. In fact the main group of the Scythians migrated to the West—Iran and beyond—and only one group (the Kushans) remained in Afghanistan, where its chiefs continued to rule even after they had been driven out of India by the Guptas.

The Hunas or the White Epthalites had an ephemeral dominion in India. Two of their kings, Toramana and Mihiragula, made raids into India, but eventually they were thrown out by Yashodharman, King of Malwa, and Baladitya of the Gupta dynasty. Their power entirely collapsed when the Persians and the Turks inflicted a crushing defeat upon them on the Oxus. It is doubtful if their rule could have been so rapidly eliminated if a large division of their stock had occupied territories in the Panjab or Rajasthan.

The composition of the people inhabiting the Panjab and Rajasthan regions does not lend support to the view that an alien ethnic group settled here. The physical type of the peoples in the Panjab, Rajasthan and the upper castes in western Uttar Pradesh is so uniform as to preclude any possibility of a mixture on a large scale. Ghurye points out that the supposition that the Rajputs are allied to the white Hunas, cannot be sustained, for they are dolichocephalic, while the Hunas were a brachycephalic race.[1]

During the period of 600 years that followed the expulsion of the Hunas, no serious inroad occurred. Then in the eleventh century Afghans and Turks led by Mahmud of Ghazni forced open the gates of India. This movement culminated in the establishment of Muslim rule in India. From the end of the twelfth century to the end of the eighteenth century, Muslim emperors ruled over a greater part of India.

[1] Ghurye, G. S., *Caste and Class in India* (new edition, 1937), pp. 128-29

The impact of Islam effected changes in the cultural life of the Indian people. It influenced religion, thought, language, literature, and arts—architecture, painting and music. Its influence on Indian culture was deep and pervasive. But so far as the socio-economic structure was concerned there was little modification. The Hindu system of tribes and castes and the Hindu law concerning the basic relations of family and caste showed little change. On the contrary, the Muslims themselves were assimilated to Hinduism. Caste divisions, marriage customs and rules of inheritance which obtained among the Hindus continued among them even on conversion to Islam.

The number of Muslims who entered India during these six hundred years was not large. Apart from the armies and the camp followers of the conquerors only a trickle of learned men, poets, merchants, adventurers and some persecuted officials and noblemen drifted into India. The Muslims of Central and Western Asia who came to India were ethnically hardly different from the inhabitants of north-western India. They were not numerous enough to produce any considerable change in the racial, economic, or social life of the country.

Thus from the time of the Aryan migrations in the second millennium B.C. to the eighteenth century A.D. the ethnic substratum of society underwent no violent or radical modification. The stream of cultural tradition received many tributaries from abroad, but continued to flow without losing its basic identity.

This does not mean that time stood still. Change was inevitable. But in India change had been slow and limited. It scarcely stirred the deeper waters. The socio-economic foundations of life stood firm through the vicissitudes of history down to the end of the eighteenth century.

The evidence for the continuity of Indian culture is overwhelming. In the Middle Ages a 'Hindustani way' of life existed all over India as testified by Babar. In the geographical regions sub-types of this Hindustani way flourished. But they were varieties of the main genus of culture or branches of the Hindustani way.

What India lacked, however, was the consciousness of oneness—social and political unity. Even in the periods when one political system dominated the whole country the sense of fellowship in a social community or of willing obedience to a common authority

was lacking. Neither cultural homogeneity nor political overlordship succeeded in breaking down the barriers which divided groups, societies and peoples of India. The two institutions which continued to offer unyielding resistance to unification were caste and village.

IV CASTE

Social immobility, fragmentation and self-sufficiency are the main characteristics of caste and village. Through them particularism became so deeply entrenched that political upheavals, changes of dynasties, march of conquering hosts and even natural catastrophes were unable to produce any impression upon the system.

Caste is an enormously complex and protean social phenomenon. Although a great deal has been written about it, many aspects of it still remain obscure. It is difficult to characterise it with definiteness. Anything asserted about it may be challenged, for it is riddled with vexatious contradictions. Yet the phenomenon, almost unique in the history of civilisations, is there and it is impossible to understand India's past or to speculate about its future without an appreciation of its profound influence upon affairs and a knowledge of its peculiar nature and bewildering ramifications.

One of the strange things about caste is that it has a dual existence. On the one hand, there is the theoretical or ideal system of caste which is propounded in the Hindu religious legal literature, viz. the Smritis and Dharma Shastras and their annotations and commentaries. On the other, there is the actual network of groups and subgroups, the factual description of which may be gathered from various sources—literary and otherwise. But surprisingly enough the full picture of its complicated and tangled skein has been revealed only since census operations started in the nineteenth century.

Caste is an ancient institution for almost all its ingredients are to be found in the Vedas. Race, tribe, class, occupation, creed and ritual—such are the elements which have gone into its making. In the Aryan society as reflected in the Rig Veda, race consciousness appears in the contrast between the Aryan possessing a fine high nose and fair colour and the non-Aryan *dasa* or *dasyu*, who is dark and snub-nosed. The Vedas mention many Aryan and some non-Aryan tribes which in later history became submerged in caste. The division among three functions—Brahma, indicative of priesthood; Kshetra, of military force; Vis, of productive and economic activity—is

recognised. This division corresponds with the similar division among the Aryans of Iran—*Atharvan, Rathaestara, Vastriya fshuyant* (priest, warrior and cultivator). The fourth class, namely, the *Shudras* are the *Huiti* of Iran. Among the three there existed differences of ritual. The *Kshatriya* was the royal sacrificer, who aspired to identification with the divine principle through the rite. The *Brahmana* was the officiant who was an expert in the procedure of rites and their conduct without mistakes. The *Vaishya* was the retainer of the king who participated in the State ceremonial and fed the sacrifice with the produce of land and cattle.

In these early times, however, the divisions had not hardened into castes. Apart from the four Varnas, the Rig Veda notes a number of professional and occupational groups, for example, barbers, carpenters, medicine-men, iron-smiths and tanners. There is also the mention of distinctions based on differences of cult and ritual. The Arya is *barhismat* (sacrificer), the Dasa is *avrata* (lawless), *akratu* (without rites) and *mridhravacah* (of evil speech).

As time passed the divisions hardened. In the earlier ages the hereditary principle had little importance. Then Brahmanas could become Kshatriyas and Kshatriyas Brahmanas. Devapa, the son of a Kshatriya king, adopted the avocation of a *purohit*. In later literature many instances are found of similar changes. Of Brahmanas, as rulers and fighters, there are a number of examples—Drona, Ashvatthama, Kripacharya the warriors, the Sungas who succeeded the Mauryas, and the Kanvas, the rulers. The Satavahanas claimed to be "unique Brahmanas", "destroyers of the pride and conceit of the Kshatriyas".

But the Rig Veda itself introduced the idea of the immutability of caste by laying stress upon the fact of birth, for it attributed the origin of each caste to a particular organ of the primeval man (Purusha). Once the theory was formulated that caste was dependent upon birth, it gradually laid its hold upon the ideology and practice of India, and each succeeding period of history saw its influence spread over society like that of the baleful *upas* tree.

The theoreticians keen on explaining the multiplicity of caste took hold of the single factor of birth and attempted to explain the facts on its basis. The offspring of marriage between members of the same caste reproduced the caste and maintained its purity. Mixed marriages in which the father belonged to the higher caste and the

mother to a lower caste (*anuloma* marriage) produced children hardly inferior in status to that of the father, but in marriages in which a man of a lower caste married a woman of a higher caste (*pratiloma*), the status of the progeny was lower than that of either parent.

As there could be numerous permutations and combinations of such unions they could give rise to any number of castes and sub-castes. The law-givers thought the castes originated in this manner. But they attempted to fix each caste permanently to a single function or occupation. Thus an unalterable framework of society and its constituent section was drawn up. This ideological system became fixed in the minds of the people, and facts, however refractory, were sought to be adjusted to its regime.

The theory was elaborated by Manu and other writers on Dharma and continued to hold the field, so that, as late as the seventeenth century, books like *Jati Viveka* and *Shudra Kamalakara* followed the traditional lines regarding the origin and structure of the caste system.

These treatises hold that caste is determined by birth; that the plurality of sub-castes and out-castes was due to the prevalence of hypergamy; that each caste had its fixed occupation, although in certain circumstances, especially in times of trouble, other occupations were permissible; that caste placed restrictions on the freedom of eating and drinking and that there was a fixed social order which defined the position and status of a caste or sub-caste in the social hierarchy.

But if, in contrast with the theory, facts are taken into consideration, the actual distribution of the peoples into groups and sections is found to be much more complex than that described in the theological treatises.

According to P. V. Kane, the number of castes mentioned in the sacred books comes to 172.[1] But according to the census reports there are about 200 castes and 2,000 sub-castes in each linguistic region of India, and in the whole of India there are more than 800 main castes and over 5,000 smaller groups. Then the striking fact which the sacred books ignore is the regional differences in the caste composition of the population. The only caste which is common all over India is that of the Brahmanas. The *Rajputs* who may be regarded as representing the Kshatriya Varna of the law books are

[1] See Kane, P. V, *History of Dharmasastra*, Vol II, Part I, pp. 71 ff.

mainly confined to the Panjab, Rajasthan, Uttar Pradesh and the central uplands. They are a handful scattered in eastern India and the Deccan. Again, both the names and the standing of those castes which are engaged in industrial, agricultural or commercial pursuits differ from province to province. In the lowest grades some castes are common, but there are many quite different.

What is even more important is the distribution of the higher and lower castes. The proportions between the privileged castes (Brahmanas and Rajputs) or the clean castes (all those from whom water may be accepted by the privileged castes) and the unclean castes (untouchables or "exterior castes"[1]) differ from province to province, as the following table[2] shows.

	Hindus	Brahmans	Rajputs	Others
	millions	per cent	per cent	per cent
Assam	3 06	3 9	3	95 8
Bengal	45 45	6	3	91
Bombay	17 83	5 6	2 5	92
C.P.	8 7	4 1	2 6	93 3
Madras	28 5	4	05	95·95
Panjab	9 25	3	4	93
N W.P.	38 55	12	8	80
Central India	7 8	12	10 4	77 6
Rajputana	9 2	9 8	5 2	85
India	188	7	3 8	89 2

So far as the untouchables are concerned their statistics show that in 1931 they constituted 14 per cent of the whole population of India and 21 per cent of the Hindus. In Bombay their percentage was the lowest—11 per cent—and in Assam the highest—37 per cent.[3] Moreover, each region had its own special untouchable castes, though the *Chamars* were spread all over India.

These statistics refer undoubtedly to a much later date, as the

[1] See *Census of India*, 1931, Vol I, Part I, p 471
[2] *Census of India*, 1881, Vol II (Statistics of Population), pp. 240-41
[3] *Census of India Report*, 1931, Vol. I, Part 1, p. 494

figures for the eighteenth century are not available. But they may be taken to indicate roughly the state of Hindu society in that century. Absolute numbers change with the normal increases and decreases in population, but unless there are known reasons to account for it, the relative percentages are not likely to diverge.

There were other regional peculiarities too. The schemes of social precedence among the castes were not identical. In the south, the *Kammalan* caste disputed the supremacy of the Brahmanas. In Bengal, the *Kayasthas* were included among the Shudras. But in Bihar and Uttar Pradesh they were considered *Dwijas*. In Maharashtra the Kayasthas (*Prabhus*) look upon themselves as having sprung from Kshatriya stock. Such differentiation applied to the other castes too. Then, the customs and usages as to prohibited degrees of marriage were also divergent. In some regions the rules laid down in the Mitakshara of Vijnanesvara prevailed while in others Dayabhaga or Jimutavahana was accepted. The social restrictions and disabilities were not the same over all parts of the country. In the north the ideas of pollution by touch were not so highly developed as in the south. In the south as the untouchable was supposed to exude impurity, so even his shadow was to be avoided, and in Tamilnad and Malabar exact distances were prescribed to be maintained between the members of the unclean castes and the upper castes. In the matter of the use of wells, tanks and even rivers, considerations of pollution prevailed. Entrance into the temples was forbidden. In most of parts of the country the quarters of the unclean castes were segregated. But in certain regions every caste was allotted a distinct quarter in the villages and cities.

Acceptance of cooked food by one caste from another is another regional matter. In eastern Bengal, Gujarat and southern India, there is no distinction between *kachcha* (food cooked without *ghee*) and *pakka* (food cooked in *ghee*). But in other regions the acceptance of *pakka* preparations from the lower castes by the higher castes is not forbidden.

In some parts of India, for example, Madras the non-Brahmanas were divided in two groups—"right-hand" and "left-hand". The second were not allowed "riding on horse-back in processions, carrying standards with certain devices and supporting their marriage booths on twelve pillars."[1]

Notwithstanding regional variations there are certain universal

[1] Ghurye, G. S, *Caste and Class in India*, p. 13

features of the caste. The most important among them is endogamy. Caste determines the boundaries of the social circle within which marriage is permitted and without which marriage is forbidden. But most castes are sub-divided into numerous sub-castes. Apparently the Hindu genius took a peculiar delight in its own social atomisation, for any excuse was good enough to break up a group into smaller groups.

Sub-castes were created on racial, tribal, economic, political, sectarian, and territorial grounds. Even a difference of technique in a craft or a change of occupation or of residence was a valid reason for setting up a new sub-caste. The offspring of miscegenation often contributed to their numbers. Peculiarities of custom and curiosities of behaviour also gave rise to fission.

Many foreigners were admitted into the caste system. *Sakadvipi Brahmanas* are supposed to have belonged to the Scythian race. The *Magh*, *Nagar*, *Karhada*, and *Havik Brahmanas* are perhaps of foreign origin. *Dravida Brahmanas* may have a racial factor in their origin. The *Chitpavan Brahmanas* of Maharashtra in head form, colour of skin and eyes, are different from the Brahmanas of the Panjab and Uttar Pradesh. *Mundas*, *Santhals*, *Oraons* and others, who were non-Aryan aboriginal peoples, have become castes.

Castes and sub-castes based upon tribal names are numerous, for example, *Ahir*, *Gujar*, *Jat*, *Maratha*, *Bhil*, *Dom*, *Gond*. *Karan*, *Kayastha* and *Rajput* are essentially political castes; the first two functioned as petty officials and the Rajputs were wielders of authority. Sectarian divergences gave rise to *Rigvedi*, *Atharvavedi*, *Yajurvedi*, *Samvedi*, *Eknathi*, *Smarta* and *Vaishnava Brahmanas*, and such castes as *Lingayats*, *Vishnois*, *Kabir-panthis*, *Shatnamis* and *Shaktas*, etc. Territorial divisions lay at the basis of numerous sub-castes, for example, among Brahmanas there are *Kanaujia*, *Sarvaria*, *Saraswats*, *Konkanastha*, *Deshastha*, *Nagar*, *Oswal*, *Shrimali*, *Sorthia*, *Rarhi* and *Barendra Valnad*, *Vangi Nadu*, *Kanara*, *Kamma*, *Vaidika*, etc.; among Vaishyas and Shudras there are numerous sub-castes bearing the names of cities, villages, districts, etc.

Peculiarities of customs and oddities of behaviour or profession were responsible for the formation of *Puranias* or *Juthias* who are the progeny of *Basors* by *Ahir* wet nurses; *Changia Chamars* who smoke by means of a leaf pipe; *Suvarhas*, a sub-caste of *Dhimars*, who deal in pigs; *Vatalias* are bastards of Gujarat *Kumbhars*.

Musahars (mouse-eaters), a low aboriginal sub-caste; *Bhulias* (forgetful), a sub-caste of weavers; *Dublas* (weaklings), a division of the aboriginals of Gujarat; *Kallars* (thieves); *Tiyans* (southerners); and *Pariahs* (drummers), are sub-groups whose names point to various peculiarities.

Occupation is the second important feature of caste and sub-caste. According to some anthropologists the Indian caste structure is founded upon occupation. The four Vedic Varnas are functional. The Brahmana's vocation is prayer (Brahma) and all that it implies, the Kshatriya is engaged in the exercise of dominion (Kshatra), the Vaishya is the producer, and the Shudra's calling is service.

Apart from the four Varnas, occupational groups have existed from the earliest times. They tended to become endogamous castes and sub-castes, thus determining occupation on the basis of birth. The number of occupational castes and sub-castes is legion. The amazing thing is that small differences in technique and process have split them into still smaller splinter groups, mutually exclusive for the purpose of marriage relations.

Take for instance the *Chamars* (leather workers). They are a numerous caste. They have a number of sub-divisions, some regional and territorial, but others related to specific processes of leather working: the *Budalgirs* are makers of leather oil-cans, *Zingars* are saddlers and *Katwas* leather-cutters. Similarly *Dhimars* (fishermen) include *Bansias* who fish with bamboo-rods, and *Bandhaiyas* who use rope-made contrivances. *Malis* (gardeners) are split into *Phul Malis* who raise flowers, *Zira Malis* who cultivate cumin seeds, and *Halda Malis* who grow turmeric. There are sub-castes of sellers of parched gram (*Dhurias*), catechu-makers (*Khairas*), salt-refiners (*Lonharas*), sheep-tenders (*Mendhes*), buffalo-tenders (*Mhaskas*), musicians (*Vajantaris*) and snake-charmers (*Mang-garudis*).

But to regard the community of occupation as the sole basis of caste would be a mistake, for many different castes have the same occupation, and the same caste follows many different occupations. What is generally speaking true is that occupations tend to be hereditary.

The third feature of the caste system is that it fixes the status of groups and sub-groups in an hierarchical order. In this way the position of the individual together with his rights and duties is determined. The four-fold division contemplated in the

religious books is really an attempt to classify and grade individuals and groups. But the ideal scheme does not wholly correspond with facts, except that the Brahmanas are universally acknowledged as the highest and the untouchables as the lowest caste. But there is no uniformity in the different regions of India in the number of intermediate castes and their sub-castes in their relative position.

Caste not only determined the status of a person but also influenced religious beliefs and practices. The Brahmanas were divided into Smartas, Shaivas and Shaktas, and the followers of the right- and of the left-hand path. Among the Kshatriyas, there were similar divisions. But in such matters the choice was more a matter of family tradition or individual inclination. Among the non-*Dwija* castes, however, gods and goddesses (like *gram devatas*) and rites and ceremonies were, more or less, specialised to the group. This diversity of worship accentuated differences between castes and their sub-divisions. Thus within the framework of caste and sub-caste, civil and religious status, occupation, social intercourse, marriage, eating and drinking, were fixed. The rules and regulations were partly derived from religious law books, and partly based upon custom and tradition.

In order to give effect to the rules and enforce the caste restrictions, the lower castes had a permanent council, a sub-committee with a headman. The permanent council was a representative assembly. The representatives were either all heads of families or men of age and experience. The assembly had a committee to guide and direct its deliberations. It was a small body usually consisting of five members and was known as the Panchayat. The Panchayat was always ready to act and it could summon the larger body at a moment's notice.

The chairman of the committee was the headman, either hereditary or elected for life. His title was Chaudhari or Pradhan or Sarpanch. Sometimes he had associated with him one or two other officers—Naib, Diwan, Mukhtar, etc. The other members of the committee or the Panch were also either hereditary or elected for life. But often they were chosen as required. The insignia of the office of the headman was a turban which was ceremonially tied on the new Chaudhari's head.

The permanent organisation of a Panchayat belonged to an endogamous sub-caste of a particular locality—village, town or city quarter—known as *juhar*, *tat* or *chatai*. Sometimes two or more

Panchayats met to consider an inter-sub-caste matter, but there was no council or Panchayat of the caste as a whole.

The jurisdiction of the Panchayat was fairly wide. "The type of cases which are tried by a Panchayat are breaches of the social custom of the caste, breaches of morality, if they infringe caste rules, certain religious offences, domestic disputes, such as suits for the restitution of conjugal rights, breaches of promise of marriage, or neglect to send a wife to her husband when of age; less usually, minor cases that could have come under the law of the land, whether civil or criminal, such as assaults or debt; and not infrequently cases involving a trade dispute."[1]

The sanctions available for executing the decisions of the Panchayat were fines, expenses of feasts to the brotherhood or to Brahmanas, temporary or permanent outcasting. Sometimes pilgrimage, begging of alms or some form of degradation was imposed.

The higher castes, especially the Brahmanas and the Kshatriyas, had no permanent instrument of caste government. In the ancient times the monarch was the guardian of *varnashrama dharma* (law of caste and stages of life). In medieval times in the territories ruled by the Hindu princes the preservation of caste was the recognised duty of the State. There are plenty of instances in which the Maratha administration, for example, intervened and enforced the caste law. But the jurisdiction of the State did not seem to extend beyond the higher castes. There are few notices of cases in which the government showed any interest in the enforcement of rules and traditions or their violation among the lower castes.

The fact is that India's polity in those days was functional to the caste system which had divided society into two sections—a small oligarchy or ruling minority consisting of the higher castes and the masses or the "proletariat" (in the Toynbeean sense), a very numerous class of the ruled made up of the lower castes. The monopoly of power was in the hands of the first: so also was the monopoly of knowledge. The Brahmanas were the learned class and a learned individual was regarded as the custodian of law and justice, competent to give decisions on questions requiring the knowledge of rules of law, of judicial procedure and of appropriate punishments. The prestige of the Shastri or Pandit was a sufficient guarantee for the

[1] Blunt, E. A. H., *Census of India*, 1911, Vol. XV, United Provinces of Agra and Oudh, Part I, Report, p. 337

execution of his decrees, as public opinion invariably supported him.

The administration of justice (civil almost entirely and criminal partly) was the concern of the Brahmana, and so far as the Hindu community was concerned, this state of affairs continued till the establishment of British dominion in India. The existence of the religious code dispensed with the need of a representative or advisory assembly to deliberate upon common caste matters or individual offences. But opportunities for caste meetings were offered on occasions of religious fairs and festivals like the great bathing sessions at Hardwar, Prayag, etc. It was also possible to consult the eminent scholars of well-known religious centres such as Banaras.

A heavy responsibility rested upon the shoulders of the Brahmanas. Not only were they answerable for the spiritual and moral welfare of society, but the very continuity and coherence of the social system depended upon them. Unfortunately, they failed to discharge these duties adequately, although the blame lies not so much upon individuals as upon the system.

The outstanding characteristic of caste is its exclusiveness. The Hindu social system, in spite of what its theorists and apologists may say, laid greater emphasis upon disintegration than upon integration. It split society into sections which prevented social fusion. Each component part subsisted in its atomic aloofness. The filaments which could join them together in an indissoluble whole were few and fragile.

The Brahmanas were the upholders of the Vedic religion. But unlike the wardens of other faiths they looked upon themselves as the exclusive practitioners and professors of their religion. They considered it incumbent upon them to study its dogmas, doctrines and theology and to practise its rites and ceremonies, but they did not feel concerned if the other castes failed to conform. They left the maintenance of ritual and ceremonial and of education in religious doctrine to the caste itself. They functioned as the officiating priests at worship and the performance of rites. The Brahmanas were so conservative that they tolerated no deviation from social rules or details of worship. Changes in circumstances and in public opinion had little effect upon the rigidity of their beliefs and practices. They resisted popular pressures by adumbrating the doctrine of stages of spiritual evolution and formulating a variety of standards for the

different castes. The Vedic rites and sacrifices were reserved for the Brahmanas, but for the other castes the religion of the Puranas was good enough. Confronted with the challenge, first of Buddhism and then of Islam, the great Acharyas developed the philosophy of love and devotion. But *bhakti* (love) was reserved for the higher caste and *prapatti* (surrender) for the lower. The Brahmana teachers laid stress upon devotion to a personal god, Rama or Krishna. The reformers and saints of the other castes, for example, Kabir, Nanak and Dadu, taught that salvation lay in seeking the grace of the attributeless Supreme Being. The former were conservative in matters of worship and social organisation, the latter iconoclastic denunciators of caste.

Thus higher religion and the way of knowledge was the preserve of the higher castes whose vocation was to study and teach. But the others were allowed to wallow in superstition and ignorance. No attempt was made to maintain uniformities of standards in morals and religion.

Worst still, Brahmanism showed complete bankruptcy in the face of defections from Hinduism. It paid no attention to the causes which led to conversion. It had no sympathy for the low and the down-trodden. It promoted no movement to strengthen the hands of brotherhood by spreading the light of true knowledge or by teaching the ancient ways to those who had forgotten them. They even refused to re-admit into the fold those who had been forced by circumstances beyond their control to abandon their religion against their will but were willing to come back.

But what about the Kshatriyas? The legend is that Parashu Ram, the leader of the Brahmanas, decimated them twenty-one times. Historical evidence is not available to prove the accuracy of this legend. But after the fall of the Mauryas the old Kshatriya families seem to play a less and less important part in history. Then suddenly in the sixth century, the Rajputs enter upon the scene, and within a short period, they spread all over the Indo-Gangetic region (except Bengal) and in the central uplands. No satisfactory explanation of this movement has been offered till now, and it is impossible to say how far their origin may be traced to foreign and how far to indigenous elements. Their close association with the Jats and Gujars and their racial identity with them does not make the task any the easier.

The Rajputs do not fit into the caste system properly. Traditionally they are divided into thirty-six clans or families which

belonged to three branches—Surya-vanshi, Chandra-vanshi and Agni-kula. The Rajputs, as a whole, form one endogamous group, but unlike other Hindu sub-castes, their divisions are exogamous, and among them the custom of hypergamy prevails, which requires that a daughter should be married into a sept of equal or higher status than that of her parents.

Hindu law enjoins the Kshatriya ruler to maintain the social organisation in accordance with the provisions of the Smritis. When India was ruled by Hindu emperors and kings in ancient times it was possible to use the authority of the State to enforce the observance of the caste rules. Again after the conquest of India by the Muslims, the independent Hindu kingdoms and principalities possessed the competence to do so. But in the greater part of India the establishment of Muslim rule deprived caste of its political sheet anchor. The Rajput chiefs were reduced either to the position of feudatories or of zamindars, while the Muslim rulers had no interest in the Hindu social system. Deprived of protection and direction and exposed to storm and stress the system was forced into hard moulds by the instinct of self-preservation.

Already before the Muslim conquest the immobility, fragmentation and self-sufficiency of the atomic units of society had become almost complete. Cohesive forces had been reduced to a minimum and regionalism, localism, linguistic separatism, functional isolationism, sectionalism and all other forces of divergence and dispersal had come to dominate. The enthronement of anarchy limited autonomy to the sub-caste and thousands of little groups became self-sufficient units evincing little interest in the well-being or misfortunes of society as a whole. Thus caste limited the horizon of social welfare to extremely narrow limits, and induced indifference towards affairs beyond the group and the locality. The defence of society against foreign attacks and the preservation of internal order were confined to a small minority of fighting castes, but the vast majority had no part or lot in these vital matters.

V. THE TRIBES

The social confusion inherent in the caste system was aggravated by the existence of tribes. But it is not easy to distinguish between the two.

Caste is a form of grouping in which emphasis is laid upon the

regulation of inter-marriage and inter-dining, to some extent upon occupation, and upon social status. On the other hand, the tribal organisation, although based upon kinship and common ancestry (actual or imaginary), seems to be more concerned with political activities, feuds, wars, land-grabbing, acquisition and defence of dominion and property, etc. The tribe is more attached to territory than is the caste.

Whether in the beginning each Aryan tribe was constituted of all the four Varnas it is difficult to say. But in later times tribes consisting of many castes are known. For instance, among the Jats in the Panjab there are the sub-castes of *Malis*, *Bhatiaras*, *Julahas*, *Telis*, *Chuhras*, *Darzis*, *Dhobis*, *Tarkhans*, *Doms*, *Rajputs*, *Kahars*, *Kumhars*, *Kalals*, *Gujars*, *Lohars*, *Mallahas*, *Mochis*, *Machhis* and *Nais*.[1] In Bombay, the Gujar tribe includes *Darzis*, *Sonis*, *Sutars*, *Chamars*, *Dheds*, *Kumbhars* and *Vanias*.[2] The Ahirs of Khandesh count among their sub-divisions *Ahir Brahmanas*, *Ahirs* proper, *Ahir Sonars*, *Ahir Sutars*, *Ahir Lohars*, *Ahir Shimpis*, *Ahir Salis*, *Ahir Guravs* and *Ahir Kolis*.[3]

Tribes are thus a curious phenomenon. From time to time they appear on the stage and then disappear and new ones take their place. The Vedas mention *Bharatas*, *Purus*, *Anus*, *Yadus*, *Turvasas*, *Druhyus*, also *Alina*, *Paktha*, *Bhalana*, *Shiva* and *Vishanin;* but there is hardly any trace of them now.

In later times their numbers increased. The Buddhist birth stories (Jatakas) refer to sixteen Mahajanapadas or tribal states in northern India. But their identity was lost subsequently. Names of numerous foreign and Indian tribes occur in the Puranas. Some of the names have persisted, but most have disappeared. In many cases they have been absorbed in the caste system. In fact, there has been a marked tendency towards the transformation of tribes into castes, for whenever political conditions became stable and opportunities for the satisfaction of tribal ambitions diminished, tribes were overlaid with caste functions. During this process, it is not easy to say whether a group should be recognised as a caste or a tribe.

Among the tribes, too, there are differences in status. Some enjoy a high status, for example, the Rajputs and the Marathas. The Jats, Gujars and a number of others come next. But then there are numerous

[1] Ibbetson, D., *Panjab Castes*, pp. 106-7
[2] Enthoven, R. E., *The Tribes and Castes of Bombay*, Vol. II, p. 21
[3] *Ibid* Vol I, p. 24

others which can hardly be distinguished from the exterior castes of the Hindus. Some tribes are numerically so large and geographically so scattered that in spite of their common names, their divisions —clans and septs—are independent of one another.

The tribes and clans have played an important role in Indian history. They settled down in different tracts and organised their separate principalities. Some of them expanded into kingdoms and sometimes into empires. But these political structures were just collections of big and petty chiefs held loosely together, and perpetually threatened with internal disruption. The dominant group as well as the dependent groups had little community of life. Each was mindful of its own interests and made no attempt to fuse its particularism into the common good of all.

In the eighteenth century the specific instances were the *Kachhwahs* of Jaipur, the *Rathors* of Jodhpur and the *Sisodias* of Udaipur, the three leading Rajput clans. Their mutual jealousies and extremely short-sighted rivalries were so acute that they preferred to remain subordinate to the Mughals and to pay tribute to the Marathas rather than combine to provide peaceable and honourable conditions to Rajasthan. Even though regarded as the blue-blooded knights of Hindu India, the Rajputs vied with one another in striking down the Jats and the Marathas in order to please their overlord, the emperor of Delhi.

The Jats rose into prominence in the upper region of the Doab during the time of Aurangzeb. After his death they took advantage of the growing weakness of the empire to establish their kingdom with its centre at Bharatpur. Aurangzeb, conscious of their menace, had appointed Raja Bishun Singh Kachhwah to quell their rising. In the reign of Farrukh Siyar, Jai Singh Sawai took the command against Churaman, and brought the Jats into some sort of submission. When Ahmad Shah Abdali threatened to conquer India, the Marathas sent an army to stem the Afghan tide. Surajmal, the Jat Raja of Bharatpur, showed a friendly attitude so long as the Maratha forces were in the neighbourhood of the Jat kingdom, but as soon as they had passed across the Jamuna he changed sides, entered into an alliance with Ahmad Shah Abdali and cursed the proud Marathas. In the tribulations and triumphs of the Jats of the Doab, their kinsmen who thickly inhabited the Panjab never evinced the slightest interest.

The Marathas had opportunities which no other group enjoyed.

They were a compact people; geography favoured them, protecting them from easy reach of the Bahmani or the Mughal rulers. They had a common language and a homogeneous population. Unlike the Rajputs of Rajputana who are today a mere six per cent of the population and the Jats in the Doab who constitute eight and a half per cent of its inhabitants, the Marathas at present number about one-third of the people of Maharashtra, and are widely diffused over the province. This was in all likelihood their proportionate population in the past also. Their religious reformers inspired in them moral zeal, and the supreme military and political genius of Shivaji welded them into a state. But these advantages were lost as the aims of the Marathas were narrow. Their concept of Swaraj excluded the vision of India as a united whole, for whatever lay beyond the boundaries of Swaraj was regarded by them as alien territory, a fit object for their *mulkgiri* expeditions. Thus while they were contending for supremacy with the Mughal empire they antagonised the other Hindu communities of the north—Jats, Rajputs, Bundelas, Bengalis, Oriyas, etc.

Caste and tribe had set up impassable walls between group and group and the social whole. They obstructed cooperation and prevented coalescence.

In medieval England, too, there was the system of four classes—the nobility, the clergy, the freemen and the serfs. But they were not separated from one another by unbridgeable gulfs. The nobility and the higher clergy belonged to one class; members of the same family were both noblemen and priests. The freemen could rise into aristocracy in case of prosperity or slide down into serfdom in adverse circumstances. In France the classification was less flexible, but nothing like the caste system of India.

Many tribes had settled in England too—Angles, Saxons, Jutes, Danes and Normans, apart from the ancient Britons. But soon after the Norman conquest in 1066 A.D., they all merged into one community and no signs of their separate identities remained after two centuries. A similar fusion of tribes also occurred in France, Italy, Spain, and later in Germany and other European countries.

But in the case of India the shells into which small sections were enclosed remained intact right up to the end of the eighteenth century and even beyond. Their rigidity was due to a number of factors, chief among them being the static condition of the Indian economy. Pre-

capitalist subsistence agriculture, non-mechanised domestic industry, village self-sufficiency and small commercial activity were the dominant features of this economy. So long as they continued, the impulse for social change remained weak, and so long as the ancient socio-economic structure persisted, progress towards social unification was not possible.

Caste and tribe are not the dividing factors of the Hindu society alone. They are almost equally effective among the Indian Muslims. Although according to Risley, "Islam is a force of the volcanic sort, a burning and integrating force, which, under favourable conditions, may even make a nation. It melts and fuses together a whole series of tribes, and reduces their internal structure to one uniform pattern, in which no survivals of pre-existing usages can be detected,"[1] yet the fact is that the Islam of the Books was very different from Islam in practice. The interval between the teachings of the Prophet and the actual customs and institutions of the Muslims in medieval India is not less wide than that between the Hindu Dharma Shastras and the caste system as it was practised. Ibbetson points out that "the people (Musalmans) are bound by social and tribal customs far more than by any rules of religion."

In the Panjab the Muslims were in a majority. They were largely converts from Hinduism, but according to Ibbetson "conversion from Hinduism to Islam has not necessarily the slightest effect upon it (caste)."[2] He adds, "The Mussalman Rajput, Gujar or Jat is for all social, tribal, political and administrative purposes exactly as much a Rajput, Gujar or Jat as his Hindu brother. His social customs are unaltered, his tribal restrictions are unrelaxed, his rules of marriage and inheritance unchanged."

In the Census Report of the United Provinces of Agra and Oudh, Blunt states that apart from the Saiyids, Shaikhs, Mughals, and Pathans, "the rest as a rule are converts from Hinduism and to a greater or lesser extent possess customs with regard to marriage and Panchayats which are the counterpart of the castes to which they formerly belonged. Muhammedan Rajputs are strictly endogamous as a whole and have even occasionally preserved the Rajput exogamous rules. The occupational groups usually have Panchayats quite as strong as those of their Hindu brethren; this is the case amongst the

[1] Risley, H., *The People of India*, 1908 edition, p. 208
[2] Ibbetson D., *Panjab Castes*, p. 13

Banjaras, Khumras, Julahas, Behnas, Kuzgars or Kasgars (Muhammadan Kumhars), Mukeris, Tawaif, Shaikhs, Mehtars (Bhangis), Halwais, Kunjras, Manihars, Churihars, Nanbais, Qalandars, Ghogars, Kanmails, and others."[1]

P. C. Tallents gives a list of Muslim castes of Bihar and Orissa.[2] It contains the names of *Dhunia, Jolaha, Kunjra, Pathan, Saiyid* and *Sheikh*. Enthoven has remarked about Gujarat that the *Momna Kunbis* and *Molesalams* look to Islam for their religion and to Hinduism for their social structure.[3] Regarding Sind he says, "theoretically, as Musalmans, the sub-tribes are all equal, and may inter-marry freely; but, in practice, great weight is given to the social position of the different divisions, and marriage is restricted either to those within the limits of the tribe, or to members of tribes of equal social standing."[4]

Richard Burn found all the features of the Hindu caste among the Muslims—endogamy, specialisation of occupation, rules of precedence, and social restrictions. J. H. Hutton regrets the decision of the Government of India to record caste only when information was volunteered, and notes that "in the case of some Muslim groups [caste] has been tabulated where such groups present functional and social features obviously derived from the caste system." He adds that "inter-group marriage is apt to be restricted in the case of Muslim groups derived from the Hindu castes."[5]

All the Census Reports before 1931, give long lists of Muslim castes, and there is no doubt whatever that in the eighteenth century Muslim inhabitants of India followed the pattern of the Hindu society. But there was one fundamental difference. The Hindu caste system, however much it may have diverged in practice from the provisions of the sacred law codes, enjoyed their support in essence. There was no basic discrepancy between the sacred injunctions and actual usages.

On the other hand, the existence of caste among the Muslims was in direct contravention of the doctrines of Islam. From the religious point of view caste was un-Islamic, and when his conscience was roused the true believer was bound to repudiate it. But this awakening was undreamt of in the eighteenth century.

[1] Blunt, E A H., *Census of India*, 1911, Vol XV, United Provinces of Agra and Oudh, Part I, Report, p. 358
[2] Tallents, P C , *Census of India*, 1921, Vol. VII, Bihar and Orissa, Report, pp. 247-48
[3] Enthoven, R. E , *Census of India*, 1901, Vol. IX, Bombay, Part I, Report, p. 177
[4] *Ibid.* p 204
[5] Hutton, J. H., *Census of India*, 1931, Report, p. 430

Muslim tribalism afflicted the Muslims even more than it did the Hindus. Pathan and Baluch tribes and their numerous clans and septs clustered in the western region on both sides of the Indus. The Hindu tribes, on conversion, retained their organisation and exclusiveness in spite of the change in religion; such were the Muslim Rajputs, Jats and Gujars. The Saiyids claim descent from the Arabs and the Mughals from Central Asian tribes. Under the rule of the Lodi dynasty in the fifteenth century many Afghans settled down in India. Among them the Surs, who almost succeeded in throwing out the Mughals, and the Rohillas who acquired great prominence in the eighteenth century, were noteworthy. An ancient and very turbulent tribe was that of Meos who lived to the south-west of Delhi.

Among the Musalmans, the Saiyids were marked out for special regard and veneration. It was a sin to hurt a Saiyid, or even to abuse him. Aurangzeb held, "true love for the high-ranked Saiyids is a part of our faith, nay more, it is the very essence of spiritual knowledge; and enmity to this tribe is the cause of entry into hell-fire and of (incurring) the anger of God."[1]

The Mughals and Pathans were the soldierly classes. The Mughals were the favourites of the rulers. They were entrusted with military and civil responsibilities. The Pathans were treated as suspects in their loyalty towards the empire. They usually resorted to turbulence and defiance of authority.

The Hindu converts of the better class were called Nau-Muslims and given the designation of Shaikh. They clung to their original grouping, caste name, occupation and customs. The Indian-born Musalmans—whether Nau-Muslims or the offspring of the earlier migrants—were not held in great esteem. The emperors showered favours and distinctions on the foreigners who looked upon themselves as superiors. Roe and Fryer were struck by this sense of superiority and noted that they (Mughals) "prided themselves to be called Whites.....in scorn of the Indians, who are Blacks."[2]

The Muslims like the Hindus recognised two classes. Those who belonged to the upper class and aspired to participate in State activities were called *sharif* (noble), and the others who were mostly converts from inferior Hindu castes were called *radhil* (ignoble).

[1] *Ahkam-i-Alamgiri*, No. 32, text, p. 36; translation volume, p. 88
[2] Roe, Sir Thomas and Fryer, Dr. John, *Travels in India in the Seventeenth Century* (London, 1873), p. 447

Muslims were thus riddled with regional, tribal, racial, sectarian and caste differences. Turanis were rivals of Iranis; Afghans were hostile to Mughals, who had displaced them in the empire of Delhi. Hindustani Muslims resented the pride and vanity of the Vilayatis (arrivals from the countries of Iran and Trans-Oxiana). The Shias reviled the first three Khalifas whom the Sunnis regarded as the "righteous leaders of the Muslims" (Khulfa-i-Rashidin). The Sunnis looked upon the Shias as heretics (Rafizis).

There were among the Muslims numerous occupational castes too, for example, the weavers (*Julahas*), butchers (*Qasabs*), water-carriers (*Bhishtis*), sweepers (*Lalbegis*), etc.

The same fissiparous tendencies in society, and oligarchical monopolist interests in political affairs, prevailed among the Muslims as did among the Hindus.

Caste and tribe provide the basis of social life in India. They both embody the principle of kinship. But apart from kinship there are other factors which underlie human group life. Among them territory is important. This is the principle of contiguity in space—neighbourhood. Land provides for some of the primary needs of man, and its exploitation creates relations which are the substance of group life.

Caste and tribe are essentially non-territorial, but in India their multiplicity, near-autonomy and internal solidarity were factors which prevented their integration into larger wholes. Hence the consciousness of an integrated Hindu society never developed. Even a people living in the same region and speaking the same language did not grow into a conscious territorial society. There never appeared a Bengali, Panjabi, Andhra, Tamil or Gujarati nationality. The Maratha upsurge might appear as an exception, but in reality it was not so, because under the rule of the Brahmana Peshwas orthodoxy reasserted itself, doing away with what little solidarity had been effected by revolutionary social forces.

Nationalism has both a negative and a positive aspect. It includes people with certain common traits. It excludes all others. In the political structure created by Shivaji and inherited by his successors, the idea of an exclusive Maratha people united by national and moral bonds and devoted to the maintenance of their Maratha identity, welfare and independence, never became prominent.

Nor did caste allow the growth of wider social groupings or kinship on an occupational or even sectarian basis. Brahmanas,

Kshatriyas or other castes never cooperated on an all-India or regional basis, nor did the pursuits of agriculture, trade or industry lead to a federation of similar occupations. Vaishnavas, Shaivas or Shaktas living in different localities showed little consciousness of existence of similar sects elsewhere. Even movements started by the Nanak, Kabir, Chaitanya, Ramdas and others, in spite of a community of outlook, remained particularistic.

Tribes too exhibited little inclination towards working together. The Jats of Sind, of the Panjab, of Rajasthan and of Uttar Pradesh, continued to plough their lonely furrows. So did the Rajputs of the Panjab, Rajasthan, Uttar Pradesh and central India. No cohesion existed among less advanced tribes. The Afghans, Pathans, Baluchis, Rohillas and others were the followers of the same religion, yet had no common political aims or organisation.

Thus neither the Hindus nor the Muslims as a whole formed a single society. In the conditions existing then, it was not possible for them to transcend their religious differences and constitute one territorial community. These omnibus terms continued to indicate severalties possessing little essential organic unity.

VI THE VILLAGE

The caste was a socio-religious institution, but it had profound economic implications. If in its socio-religious aspect, society was a totality of loosely connected castes, in the politico-economic aspect it was a congeries of villages which were its economic and territorial units. What the English manor or the French seigniory was in the early Middle Ages in Europe, that the village was in India till the end of the eighteenth century.

But the Indian village in its origin, functions and structure differed from its European counterpart. The latter had come into existence in response to the challenge of universal war and violence. The former represented an attempt to incorporate a rule of life—*varnashrama dharma.* That the actuality was far removed from the basic concept is not a valid argument to ignore the underlying assumption. Nor is this contradicted by the fact that the villages in the chaotic conditions of the eighteenth century presented an appearance of fortified strongholds surrounded by walls with bastions and watch-towers. The European village was a dual organisation. It was a relationship of master and slave, of lord and vassal. The

economic base and the martial superstructure both proclaimed its warlike purpose.

In the case of the Indian village the serf or slave, tied to the soil and to the owner, had no place. Nor did the village in India take a direct part in war which was the business of the princes and kings and of the caste whose vocation was fighting. "Though no country was so perpetually scourged with war as India before the establishment of *pax Britannica*, the people of India were never a military people,"[1] observes Henry Maine. The chief concern of the Indian village was to supplicate mother earth to yield her plenty in order to sustain mankind. In this sacred task all castes must cooperate, the Brahmana, with prayers, forecasts, and the conduct of rites and ceremonies; the Kshatriya, with protection and patronage; the farmer, with his labour; the artisan, with his service. Each must reap his reward out of the produce of the soil. Each must put his function into the general undertaking and earn his share in the harvest according to the worth of his contribution.

The Muslims who settled in the village became dyed in the same hue. The genius of the Hindu organisation obtained a hold on their minds. In religion, worship, fasts and festivals the Muslims were different, but their manner of celebrating them borrowed many features from the Hindus. In the common fairs and festivities of the village both joined together, and even in festivals peculiar to one or the other community both participated.

In the conditions of the times the village system had reached an inner adjustment which gave stability and security and assigned to every one duties according to his station. But, at the same time, it completely petrified social conditions. The stratification of society was perpetuated. The individual was bound by birth to the status of his group and had no opportunity to bring about a change in his condition. The village was divided into water-tight compartments, assuring for a small minority a life of privilege, honour and comfort, and condemning the vast majority to grinding toil, cruel privation, and unjust humiliation.

VII. VILLAGE AND TOWN

The village was the hub of the economic machine. Agriculture, industry and trade all revolved round it. In this respect India was

[1] Maine, Henry, *Village Communities in the East and West* (London, 1887), p 124

different from medieval Europe, where economic life was bifurcated, agriculture belonged to the village, and trade and industry to the town. In India there were cities but they were mere parasites. Some were seats of political authority, some centres of religion, some marked the crossing of rivers or roads, but few owed their prosperity or population to any independent industry or commerce. Bernier noticed the decay of cities as a result of the neglect of the ruling chief. Lahore, for example, was in a ruinous state because of the ruler's being away in Delhi or Agra. He found that the greater part of the population of Delhi or Agra depended upon the presence of the army.[1] In fact the inhabitants of Delhi formed part of the royal army. Of their meagre industry a greater part catered to the requirements of the dominant minority—the political chiefs, the rich aristocracy and their retinue. But the cities did not throb with the busy hum of the craft households or the animated press and bustle of merchants bargaining in the market. There were no citizens' councils to hurl defiance in the face of the lord or bishop who presumed to interfere with their liberties. Nor did the Indian village of the eighteenth century bear comparison with the English village of the same century. For, in England, "a larger proportion of the population outside the towns lived not by agriculture, but wholly or partly by industrial pursuits."[2]

In the Indian village agriculture was dominant and even the castes which were primarily devoted to other occupations practised agriculture as a subsidiary pursuit.

VIII THE VILLAGE AS THE CENTRE OF SOCIAL LIFE

The Indian village was the focus of social activity. It provided a home for the villager where he lived, married and had children. It was the abode of his gods—*gram devatas* and *kula devatas* and their shrines. It was the scene of his occupational activities. It supplied him with land on which he grew crops to satisfy his needs for food, clothing and housing. It was the centre of his cultural and communal life.

The houses in a village were built primarily to afford shelter, but climatic conditions which greatly vary from region to region, determined their construction. The main difference, however, was in the roofing—sloping roofs with thatch or tiles, or flat roofs supported on

[1] Bernier, F., *Travels in the Mogul Empire* (Constable & Smith, 1934 edition), pp.384, 282
[2] Cole and Postgate, *The Common People*, pp. 123-24

wooden beams and battens. Mud walls and beaten earth floors were universal. But houses in a village were of several types according to the status of their dwellers—the rich landowners, the members of the upper classes, the agriculturists and artisans and the castes with unclean occupations. Except for the house of the zamindar, the other houses lay together higgledy-piggledy along narrow and winding lanes. Men and animals lived in close proximity, and sanitary conditions were completely ignored.

The population of a village ordinarily consisted of the working or labouring castes, the upper castes and the officials. The labouring castes consisted of the cultivators and the artisans. The artisans were either followers of clean occupations or out-castes. The upper castes included the Brahmanas, Kshatriyas (or landowning group), and the Vaishyas (those engaged in trade, banking, etc.). Similarly the Muslims in the village would belong to either the higher group (*sharif*), corresponding to the Hindu upper castes, or the lower group (*radhil*), that is, those engaged in inferior occupations.

The number of castes was not fixed, but in villages of average size there would be fifteen to twenty of them. The proper functioning of the village depended upon their cooperation, for they were the limbs of the village body corporate.

IX FUNCTIONS OF THE VILLAGE

The cooperative organisation of the village was concerned mainly with three types of functions—(1) socio-religious and cultural, (2) economic, and (3) administrative and political.

(1) *Cultural*

The socio-religious and cultural function implied the management of the internal affairs of the caste, involving questions of commensality, connubium, and regulation of mutual relations of members. Inter-caste matters, celebration of common village festivals and rites, education, amusement and sports were within its purview. The organ of the caste for the proper discharge of this function was the caste Panchayat.

(2) *Economic*

(*a*) *Agriculture.* So far as economic functioning was concerned, the village was a self-sufficient unit. Its main productive activity was

agriculture. Arts and crafts were ancillary, and trading, banking, etc., subserved the principal business of raising different kinds of crops and arranging their disbursement and consumption. The rural standards of living were low and the village economy hardly rose above the subsistence level.

Whatever surplus was produced over and above the village needs was wrung out of the village by various agencies—landlords, intermediaries and the State. Little was available for ploughing back into agricultural improvements.

The pre-capitalistic, pre-mechanised village system continued through the centuries—almost millennia—unmodified and unchanged. The village was essentially an aggregate of land holdings with a cluster of residences. It was inhabited by groups of people having some kind of connection with one another and some instrument of common action.

The land of the village was either arable or waste. The arable land was divided into holdings cultivated by individual peasants. Unlike Europe their layout was not marked by hedges or balks. Water channels and other inconspicuous features indicated the plots. The fields of each peasant were separate and of unequal size, as is manifest from the figures of Jazia returns[1] for the year 1680-81, of Pargana Badshahpur, in the Panjab province. The Pargana had a population of 855. Out of them 320, who were indigent and incapable, were exempted from payment of the Jazia. Of the remaining 535, whose total payment amounted to Rs. 2,950 per annum, 88 belonged to the first class, and paid Rs. 1,100; 145 formed the middle class, and paid Rs. 904-4-0, and the remaining 302 belonged to the lowest grade in society, and paid Rs. 943-12-0.

The waste land was used for grazing cattle and wood-cutting, and was at the disposal of the village as a whole. Besides these divisions some land was used as site for dwellings, tanks, wells, graveyards, groves, cattle-stand and communal activities.

The main burden of exploiting the land rested upon the shoulders of the cultivators. Each cultivator with his family and dependants worked upon his individual farm, tilled the fields with his primitive plough, watered them from such sources as were available—river, canal, well, tank or reservoir—weeded them, protected the crops

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[1] Vide *Khulasat'us Siyaq* (Ms. in the Lytton Library, Muslim University, Aligarh), folios 38-39

from bird, beast and pest, and garnered the harvest on the threshing floor.

The operations of the peasant were handicapped because his tools were primitive, the manure available for the crops was scanty, seeds were not selected, draft power provided by slow-moving oxen was feeble and irrigation facilities were limited. In spite of his handicaps he performed what appeared to the foreigners visiting India then a marvellous feat—namely to raise two and sometimes three harvests in the year. Compared with the methods followed in Europe before the Agricultural Revolution of the eighteenth century, he was not backward.

He produced enough of everything for the limited needs of the community. Cereals, vegetables and some spices to garnish his food; fibres like cotton and hemp for cloth; vegetable dyes like indigo and madder to colour his garments; betel-leaves for chewing; toddy, opium, *bhang* and tobacco to satisfy the craving for sedatives, stimulants and 'pick-me-ups'. To meet his cash needs he grew indigo, sugarcane, oilseeds, cotton and linseed.

In the abundant waste lands and forests he had almost unlimited pasturing ground for his cattle, which served him in his agricultural activities and were a plentiful source of milk, butter and leather. He had plenty to eat and although compared with the Western conditions of today his standards of living were low, he had, without doubt, easier and better conditions than his successors under the British rule. For in the eighteenth century land was plentiful and, therefore, there was no need to bring inferior soil under the plough. The population of India being relatively small—between 100 to 140 million—man had a higher intrinsic value and a fairer opportunity of better living.

In the agriculture of medieval India, there were some unique features. Of the factors of production, two were of main importance, namely, land and labour. So far as land was concerned it was in such large supply that there was no competition for it. It has been calculated that there were regions of India in which, compared with the present times, only half the land was occupied; in other regions from two-third to three-fourth. There was no region in which the pressure on land had reached anywhere near saturation point. If anyone wanted land he had just to clear it of jungle and occupy it for cultivation.

The most central part of the Mughal empire was the region along the Jamuna and the Ganga from Agra to Dacca. But throughout this vast valley of the rivers forest abounded. Mathura was still in the midst of the famous Barsana forest and here Akbar hunted tigers. Early in the nineteenth century Oudh continued to be a belt of many forests. From Allahabad to Banaras and Jaunpur the cultivated area was about one-fourth of what it is today and along the Ghogra one-seventh or one-eighth. In Kara wild elephants roamed about. Azamgarh, Ghazipur, Gorakhpur and Basti were largely uncultivated, and wild beasts like elephants and rhinoceroses infested the districts. In Bihar the cultivated land today covers two-thirds of the area, but in the eighteenth century not more than one-fifth was under crop. In northern Bihar, Tirhut, Champaran, Muzaffarpur and Darbhanga were overgrown with forests. Although West Bengal was densely populated, East Bengal was full of swamps and wildernesses.

Under the Mughals some increase took place in the area under cultivation, especially in the Ganga valley. Both population and agriculture expanded in such important regions as Delhi, Agra, Ayodhya, Prayag, Jaunpur, Banaras, Patna, Rajmahal, Bardwan, Vikrampur and Tipperah. But compared to the state of things in the nineteenth century, the population was sparse and the proportion of waste and uncultivated lands large.

The natural consequence of this state of affairs was that the supply of cultivable land was plentiful and the land had not "yet obtained a value generally."[1] Land values were nominal. Sir Thomas Munro, writing in 1807, says, "nothing is plainer than that landed property has never existed in India except in Malabar Coast."[2] In the Panjab, "sale of land was unknown before the British conquest."[3] Sir John Strachey wrote, "while our policy has been to encourage the growth of private property in land. . . former Governments hardly recognized the existence of such property."[4] Elphinstone points out, "practically, the question is not in whom the property resides, but what proportion of the produce is due to each party."[5] Bennett in the Gonda Survey Report says, "there is yet no trace of private property, whether

[1] Bengal Revenue Consultation, June 20, 1808 (Report of Messrs. Cox and Tucker, para 67)
[2] Munro, Letter dated August 15, 1807, para 2
[3] Thornton, S. S , *Musalmans and Money-Lenders in the Panjab*, p. 66
[4] Strachey, Sir John, *India* (1880 edition), p. 80
[5] Elphinstone, *History of India* (1916), p. 80

individual or communal."[1] So also to quote Sir George Campbell, "We are too apt to forget that property in land as a transferable marketable commodity, absolutely owned and passing from hand to hand like any chattel, is not an ancient institution, but a modern development."[2] After a lengthy discussion Baden-Powell concludes, "ownership is not in the soils, but in the shares of the produce, and in the business of cultivation or of paying the revenue."

It was owing to its abundance that land was quite unlike other property. It was hardly marketable and that is why one hears so little of mortgages, sales and transfers of land in these times. In the sale-deeds of the eighteenth century in the Deccan the wording is that the owner begged of the buyer to take his land, etc. Consequently, it has been extremely difficult to determine the question of its ownership. In fact, occupation and use were the only attributes of property which really concerned the people. These gave rise to rights which were hereditary and inherited in accordance with the Hindu laws, but to them conditions were attached. A cultivator and his descendants continued to occupy a plot or plots of land and enjoyed the usufruct, so long as they fulfilled the condition of paying out of the produce the share due to the State. There was no question of ejecting them. But in case they neglected to cultivate the land they could be forced to quit.

Thus the Indian conception of real property was quite unique, totally incompatible with that obtaining in contemporary Europe. In the eighteenth century the European institution had shed its feudal attributes, and acquired the character of absolutism, exclusive possession, and individualism. It was vested with almost sacred rights—natural, indefeasible, inalienable, immutable, and was regarded as the foundation of liberty, personality, prosperity and culture. "The judiciary reduced the uncertain fact of ownership into specific rights, privileges, powers and immunities, vested in particular persons and validated in distinctive ways." In short, the idea of absolute property in land was alien to the India of pre-British times.

The second factor, namely, labour, was in short supply. Hence it stood high in importance and value. The kings were anxious to increase the area under cultivation and issued instructions to their

[1] Bennett, W C., *Settlement Report of Gonda (Oudh)*, 1878, pp 48-49
[2] Baden-Powell, *Land Systems of British India*, 1882, Vol I, p. 219

governors and other officials from time to time that the welfare of the peasant was their primary concern. The most effective weapon of the peasant against intolerable tyranny and oppression was to non-cooperate, abandon the village and take refuge in the neighbouring forest, if necessary, to make a new clearing and settlement.

In these conditions, slavery or serfdom of the Western type was hardly possible. But the extreme remedy of secession could not be availed of frequently and the Indian peasant was patient and forbearing, and therefore much misery and injustice, which could have been avoided, was silently borne by him.

(*b*) *Village industry*. Agriculture was the principal occupation of the inhabitants of a village. It satisfied their primary needs. But agricultural processes could not be carried on without the services of craftsmen, and there were other requirements, too, which had to be met. Thus every village was the home of a number of arts and crafts. But the basic principles of village industry were very different from what they are today. Its market was practically confined to the village. It produced articles largely for local consumption. Most of its yarn was spun and cloth woven, oil pressed and sugar made for the village folk. Its artisans—the weaver, the iron-smith, the carpenter, the potter, the leather-worker and others—worked to satisfy the village needs. Much of their product was paid for, not in cash nor as price for each article supplied, but by means of a customary payment in kind. The artisan had a fixed share of the crop at the time of the harvest. Most artisans had their own small plots of land which supplemented the quota received from the farmers. In this economy the laws of supply and demand, of profit and loss, and of prices pegged to cost of production hardly applied.

(*c*) *Trade*. There was some trading within and outside the village. There would be a shop of a grain merchant, who would also be a sort of a banker. On a fixed day in the week a bazaar would be set up in a large village, where goods, ordinarily not available, could be purchased. To the bazaar would come merchants from far and near and display their goods spread on either side of the main street. Cattle fairs held annually at some important rural centres offered opportunities for buying and selling oxen, cows and bulls.

The peasant who had to pay the land-revenue in cash was bound to carry his surplus either to the local grain merchant or to a market in the neighbourhood and in the transaction his importunate need

gave an advantage to the other party. Thus a small part of village produce found its way out and reached the urban areas where it was in demand. But it was more or less a one-way traffic. There was no return for the wealth which poured out in the form of revenue and so the rural side suffered from the disadvantage of unrequited export.

The village self-sufficiency, on the one hand, and the industrial backwardness of the cities on the other, were retarding factors in the growth of trade.

The village had little to import from outside and what it had to export consisted of heavy and low-priced goods; hence long distance internal trade was never very extensive. But there was some movement of goods from province to province. For example, Bengal imported cotton yarn, wheat, sugar, opium and salt, and sent its silk and rice to different parts of India. Gujarat imported foodstuffs and exported cash crops. Eastern and western coastal regions took rice, sugar and butter and sold salt and pepper. Indigo was collected from the Doab, Bayana and Sarkhej and sent to the sea-ports.

On the whole, compared to the size of the country and its population, the movement of goods was not considerable. For this there were many reasons—bad communications, difficulty and expensiveness of land transport, a multitude of irritating inland customs, disturbed political conditions in the eighteenth century, and risks of trade and low standards of the rural population. There were no pukka (metalled) roads and transport was by means of pack-animals.[1]

(3) *Village administration*

The third important function of the village was administration. This had two aspects—internal and external. The village organisation maintained peace and order and performed the duties of police, magistracy and judiciary. In this aspect it was an autonomous unit and its instrument was the village Panchayat.

The traditions of the village Panchayat—as distinguished from the caste Panchayat—were obscure, if not altogether extinguished, in the north during the Middle Ages. On the other hand, both in the Deccan and the far south village Panchayats continued to exist till the end of the eighteenth century, although they had lost their

[1] The bullock-cart was introduced in the Deccan by the British in 1835, vide *Gordon's Revenue Manual*

pristine vigour by that time. Their principal function was judicial. Most civil cases and petty criminal cases came before them for adjudication. In Maharashtra all suits arising out of contract—whether of accounts, covenants, or debts; cases concerning personal or real property; disputes about boundaries or distribution of water; claims to land by occupancy or prescription; quarrels between castes; infringements of established customs; breaches of promise of marriage; disregard of the rules of adoption; and all disputes relating to titles by gift, grant or inheritance were referred to them.

At some places the Panchayat was a permanent body elected periodically by the village population. At other places it was constituted on an *ad hoc* basis as the occasion arose. The parties to the dispute named a certain number of persons (from two to twenty), and the local government official nominated an umpire to superintend the proceedings. In cases involving monetary transactions, well-known Banias were invited to assist; in religious disputes Shastris sat on the Panchayat. In difficult cases when knotty points of law arose, the whole Panchayat would consist of learned scholars (Shastris).

The Patel or Muqaddam of the village was the person on whom the summoning of the Panchayat depended. According to Pottinger, "when a dispute occurred the Patel tried to settle it by amicable arbitration. If he failed in this and the parties demanded a Panchayat, he gave his permission to one being assembled. He could not name the members himself unless he was a man of much importance in other respects; but he could order anyone, whose testimony was required, to be in attendance."[1] But the Patel's powers extended only to the assembly of the Panchayat; he could not interfere with the award, nor could he interfere if the parties concerned agreed to subscribe to the arbitration or decision of their friends.

The membership of the Panchayat was open to all, cultivators included. But the tendency was to select men who were reasonably well acquainted with life and who had a good knowledge based on experience of human nature.

The parties concerned had the right to challenge members and to demand their replacement. The attendance of the witnesses was obligatory on pain of fine. There was no fixed fee in connection with the membership of the Panchayat, but the parties were expected to

[1] Pottinger, *Selection of Papers from the Records at the East India House*, Vol. IV, p. 288

pay the expenses. The plaintiff had to promise to pay a sum to the local official for calling the Panchayat, but no scale was fixed.

The procedure followed was simple. The complainant and then the defendant stated his version of the case, then the witnesses were called in and, if required, took oath. If a point needed clarification the village Patwari was asked to explain. The decision of the Panchayat was given after due deliberation. The winner of the case was ordinarily entrusted with the execution of the decree. If he failed he could count upon the assistance of the local functionary. There were no pleaders. No written record of the proceedings was kept, with the exception of the agreement between the plaintiff and the defendant, and a memorandum of the decision or award.

The aggrieved party had the option to go to a higher authority in appeal—from the Patel to the Shikdar of the taraf (subdivision) or the Mamlatdar of the pargana (district). If they were satisfied that an appeal lay, they appointed another Panchayat to decide the dispute. In case the decree or sentence was obtained by corruption or misbehaviour of the members, or if it contained any flagrant deviation from justice or custom, a new Panchayat was ordered.

Each village constituted a self-governing unit which was linked through a hierarchy of concentric organs with the supreme central authority. The village formed the foundation on which the entire structure of the State rested. It provided funds upon which depended the activity of government. The demand for revenue brought the State in relation with the village—its main supplier.

The organisation of land revenue naturally had the foremost importance in the political set-up of medieval governments, for on the soundness and efficiency of the organisation depended the life and vigour of the state.

In different parts of India there was a great variety in the land-revenue system. But the variation did not affect the general underlying plan. The main difference was in respect of the intermediaries between the cultivator and the State.

There were roughly two types of villages, northern and southern. In the northern type which was found in the Indo-Gangetic plain, there were three principal sharers in the produce of the village—the producer, the intermediary (zamindar and jagirdar) and the State. In the southern types or villages of the Deccan, the central plateau and the coast-lands, the produce was divided mainly between two

parties, namely, the cultivator and the State. The division was in all likelihood the result of the Muslim conquest.

But in both types of villages there were two sets of people, those who paid the revenue and those who did not. Among the latter group were the people who ministered to the needs of the village: (i) the recipients of charity—priests, scholars, astrologers and attendants of mosques, temples and tombs; (ii) widows and pensioners; (iii) the village servants—messengers, night-watchmen, guards of crops, water distributors, boundary-men; (iv) village artisans and servicemen—potters, braziers, cobblers, carpenters, washermen, barbers, shopkeepers, dancing girls, scavengers, etc.; and (v) landless labourers and indigent persons, for example, faqirs and beggars. In the southern villages the servants and artisans were known as Bara Baluta (twelve classes of recipients of shares in grain).

Among the people who paid the revenue were husbandmen of different castes—from the Brahmana to the out-caste; non-resident peasants who had their home in one village, but who had land taken on lease for cultivation in another. Then there might be landlords—the petty ones who cultivated their lands themselves and the big ones who had their lands cultivated by tenants. This group was normal in the northern villages, but exceptional in those of the south. They were known as *zamindars* in the north, *girasiyas* in Gujarat, *khots* in Konkan and *malguzars* in Berar.

Besides these two classes of people, there resided in the village a small number of village and State officials.

Among them all, the tiller of the soil, by whose sweat and labour the vast social mechanism was kept in motion, was the most important. Atlas-wise he bore on his back the crushing burden of the State. The problem was how to make him carry the ever-increasing load.

In the conditions of the age, force, which in modern times is used only as the last sanction for the maintenance of peace and order, was the normal resort of the government. For a ruler to maintain his authority, eternal vigilance was necessary, both against the internal disturbers of peace and the contumacious, and also against greedy neighbours ever on the watch to exploit his weaknesses and difficulties. Power and prestige were the essence of authority. Power was the function of an army with glittering armour and fear-inspiring accoutrements. Prestige could only shine through public works whose grandeur produced the impression of abundance, wealth and might.

The solid base of these pillars of war and peace was the village farmer.

Both for the donor (the villager) and the receiver (the State) the situation was pregnant with perplexities. The difficulties of the government were two-fold: (*i*) how to extract the maximum amount from the peasant, and (*ii*) how to collect the tiny driblets from each cultivator from the hundreds of thousands of hamlets and villages scattered over a vast continent.

The cultivator working according to primitive techniques was condemned to hard and unremitting toil whose reward was meagre. Out of his produce he had to meet the expenses of cultivation, the customary perquisites of artisans, village servants and officials, and the demands of the government. What remained was the guerdon of his travail. It has been calculated that 25 per cent of the gross produce covered the expenses of cultivation, 5 to 15 per cent represented the perquisites, and 60 per cent remained for the upkeep of the cultivator and his family throughout the year and for meeting the State demand. Considering the modest quantities of the cultivator's output it was of tremendous importance as to what proportion of it was surrendered to the government.

The disquieting feature of the situation was that the poor donor was completely ignorant of the disposal of the funds he contributed and the only justification for payment that he was aware of, was custom and tradition and a mystical belief that his contribution was a premium for the insurance of his life and property. In fact, innumerable generations of his had been accustomed to give the share of the king out of this produce. He had been assured by the sages that the king "took the share of the produce for the prosperity of the subjects only, just as the sun absorbed the waters in order to return them to the earth a thousandfold."[1] Abul Fazl, who regarded the husbandman as one of the four divisions of society wrote, "by their exertion, the staple of life is brought to perfection, and strength and happiness flow from their work." In his view only that agent of government is upright "who protects the husbandman, watches over the subjects, develops the country, and improves the revenue."[2]

Notwithstanding the magnanimity of these sentiments, the fact

[1] Kalidasa, *Raghuvamsa*, Canto I, 18

[2] *Ain-i-Akbari* (translated by Blochmann), Calcutta, 1927, pp. 4 and 7

is that in the eighteenth century the life of the cultivator in India was poor, nasty, miserable and uncertain.

There was a perpetual play of hide and seek going on between the State and the village—ever-increasing demands on the one side and continual evasion on the other. The desire of the State was to extract the economic rent, so that nothing but bare subsistence remained for the peasant. Aurangzeb's instructions were that "there shall be left for everyone who cultivates his land as much as he requires for his own support till the next crop be reaped and that of his family and for seed. This much shall be left to him, what remains is land tax, and shall go to the public treasury."[1]

The policy was suicidal for it killed the goose that laid the golden eggs. It left no incentive for increasing the produce or improving the methods of cultivation.

The problem of the government was, knowing the amount of annual expenditure, how to raise the necessary amount of revenue to meet it. A certain fixed and more or less unfluctuating sum was the desideratum. Land-revenue was the main source from which to provide it. No one questioned the right of the State to a share in the produce of the soil. The exact portion differed from time to time, perhaps from one ruler to another. According to the Hindu law-books the State was authorised to take one-twelfth, or one-eighth and in times of distress even one-fourth. But one-sixth appears to have been the normal rate, which is attested by Yuan Chwang, the Chinese traveller of the seventh century. In the thirteenth century Alauddin Khalji raised the demand to one-half of the produce. Sher Shah reduced it to one-third of the average yield per bigha. Akbar followed the rates of Sher Shah. But under Aurangzeb the standard was raised to one-half, and this remained in force till the end of the Mughal empire.

It was then necessary to find out what the total yield was, of which a fixed percentage must be transferred to the State treasury. The logical answer to the problem involved (i) measurement of the fields of each farmer separately, (ii) estimation of the average yield per unit of area (bigha) after taking into consideration the nature of the soil and the crops, (iii) fixation of the price of the produce on the basis of an average of prices of a number of years for each crop

[1] Quoted by Sir John Strachey, *India, its Administration and Progress* (third edition), p 126; also Firminger, *Fifth Report*, p. xxxviii

per bigha, (iv) realisation of the revenue for each year from each farmer on the basis of these rates and calculations after making the necessary concessions for variations in areas sown and for unfavourable natural conditions or calamities.

This was in essence the method introduced by Akbar in a number of provinces in his empire, which extended over the Indo-Gangetic plains and parts of the central uplands. Bengal, which had been recently annexed, was excluded from this system; so was the Deccan which was outside the empire. The merits of assessing the land-revenue according to Akbar's method were that it reduced the uncertainties both of government as well as the farmer, and provided a stable cash basis for the calculation of the share of both. It was so devised as to avoid the fluctuations of seasonal prices and the vexatious delays in commuting the grain yield into its money equivalent. The method of assessment and the schedules of demand prepared under it applied to all lands—the lands of the *khalsa* or the crown reserves which were directly administered by State officials, and the public lands which provided the funds for disbursement of salaries and awards to grantees and donees in cash or jagir. In the latter case they managed them through their own agency.

An elaborate organisation was established for the assessment and collection of land-revenue. At the top level under the ministry of revenue there were two diwans—Diwan-i-Khalsa, in charge of the crown-lands, and Diwan-i-Tan, who looked after jagir lands. Under the Diwan there were regional or provincial Diwans with a staff consisting of three sections—one dealing with assessment of revenue, the second with collection, and the third with the treasury. There were subordinate officers in charge of sarkars into which the province was divided. A sarkar consisted of a number of parganas each one of which had its own officers, namely, Qanungo, Chaudhari and Karkun. In the villages comprising a pargana there was a Muqaddam who collected the revenue, and a Patwari who kept the records.

In the villages of the northern type, the Muqaddam or the head of the village who was himself a farmer was an intermediary between the government and the village. He was responsible for the collection of revenue from the farmers and for the payment of the demand on the village. His office was hereditary and he was entitled to 2½ per cent of the collections as a recompense for his services.

In the jagir lands the agent of the jagirdar would collect the land-revenue if the jagirs were large, otherwise a jagirdar would appoint a revenue farmer.

Besides jagirdars there were zamindars who enjoyed hereditary rights in land. In some cases the zamindar would be an individual and in others a group which would be represented by a manager. Among the zamindars there were scions of ancient houses which once exercised independent and sovereign authority, but had been compelled to recognise the overlordship of the conqueror. In their case the land-revenue would really be a tribute fixed by special agreement. But there were many zamindars who were assessed just like the other farmers of the village.

In the southern type, where zamindars did not exist and jagirdars occupied an insignificant position, the situation was slightly different. In Maharashtra, the land revenue administration of Malik Ambar (1605-26) introduced the system of measurement of cultivated lands, classification of soils and fixation of one-third of the produce as the share of the government. He divided the estates into *khalsa* and *inam*. The rental of the latter was alienated for purposes of charity and as compensation for service (*watan*). The Patel and the Kulkarni managed the village revenues.

Shivaji made considerable improvements in the system. But he raised the rent to 40 per cent of the produce and at the same time remitted many cesses. The next step was taken by Balaji Baji Rao, the third Peshwa (1740-61), who carried out a new survey, a fresh crop and soil classification, and fixed new rates. His settlement is known as *kamal* (standard).

Under the Maratha system, there were two kinds of cultivators—*mirasdars* and *uparis*. The first held hereditary rights in land. These rights were inherited according to the Hindu law, and could not be attached for debt or for non-payment of revenue. The demand of the government was fixed once and for all. But the concession was made nugatory by the levy of cesses.

The *uparis* were tenants-at-will of the government and their agreement was terminable at the end of the year.

The Maratha village officers—Patel, Kulkarni, Chaugula (the assistant of the Patel), and the Mahar or the village Chaukidar, held positions comparable with those of the officials in the northern villages But unlike the Muqaddam of the north, the Patel had greater dignity

and authority. He was the chief village officer, a government dignitary who also enjoyed social pre-eminence in the village. He supervised cultivation, and was responsible for the maintenance of standards of production and for bringing fallow lands under cultivation. He had the charge of police and magisterial duties, and kept peace and repressed crime. He took the lead in the defence of the village. He had to entertain government officials as well as to organise village festivals, fairs and amusements.

The villages in the eastern regions—the Telugu and Tamil country—were organised on familiar lines. The large bulk of them were populated by three classes of tenants—(i) peasants (*vellan vagai*) who separately held their lands, cultivated them and paid government dues (*melavaram*), (ii) holders of service tenures (*bhoga, vritti, kani*) who were either *balutedars*, namely, village servants, or assignees of lands for military, religious, educational or other types of service, and (iii) holders of eleemosynary tenures (*brahmadeya, devadana, shali-bhoga*), namely, Brahmanas, religious institutions, etc.

There were patches of zamindari (*mirasi*) villages also; but by the end of the eighteenth century they had declined, except for a number of large estates of chiefs like poligars and zamindars.[1]

In these villages the cultivators were the proprietor farmers who could sell and gift their lands, inferior peasants (*ulkudi*), and casual cultivators (*parakudi*) who had no share in the property of the co-sharing landholders.

The organisation of these southern villages in the eighteenth century differed little from that in other parts of the country. There was an establishment of hereditary village servants including servicemen and artisans, of village officials comprising the headman called by such names as Patel, Nattamkar, Maniyakaran, Naidu, Reddi, Peddakapu, etc., and the village keeper of accounts known as Karnam. Their duties were the same as those of their counterparts in the north. The servants and artisans obtained their shares in the grain harvested (*mera* or *swatantram*) and the officials held rent-free or *inam* lands, and fees contributed by the villagers.

The produce was divided into three parts—the share of the servants and artisans which was about five per cent, and the share of the government and the farmer, on a half and half basis, from the remainder.

[1] Baden-Powell, *Land Systems of British India* (1892), Vol. III, pp 133-38

During the eighteenth century the regulation (*zabti*) system of Akbar and its equivalent, the *kamal* system of the Marathas rapidly disintegrated. The real virtue of the system lay in the fact that it brought the individual peasant into direct contact with the officers of the State, that it limited the license of the self-willed intermediaries and compelled them to follow the methods and schedules laid down by the government, abolished many cesses, introduced stability in rates, lightened the burden of the peasants and created opportunities for the expansion and improvement of crops.

But the system was expensive and could work only if there was unremitting vigilance at the centre and honesty and efficiency among the land-revenue staff. Unfortunately, the eighteenth century Mughal emperors were impecunious. Their treasuries were empty and the salaries of their officials were always in arrears. The occupants of the throne were incapable, lazy and worthless and the services were disloyal, selfish and incompetent.

It is not surprising that in these conditions the administration should have broken down. Akbar's aim had been to deal with each peasant directly by entering separately into an agreement (*patta* and *qabuliyat*) for revenue with him, by requiring that the name, parentage, area cultivated and crops sown should be recorded for each peasant (*asami*) individually and that receipts for the payments given severally. But in the eighteenth century this relation between village and State was snapped although the village continued as a corporate unit. For the State began to deal with the village as a whole, entering into an agreement with the village headman and leaving the collection of individual contributions to him. Thus the self-sufficiency and isolation of the villages became pronounced and the ties which bound the villages together in one body politic were weakened.

Another sinister development was the spread of the system of farming. Akbar had rightly frowned upon it. But under his successors it spread like a noxious weed overlaying and choking the ground. Several things conspired to bring this about, the chief being the inordinate growth of jagirs. But as the number of jagirs grew their value diminished. The jagirdars, unable to supervise them directly, appointed farmers, who collected the revenues by extortionate methods, giving a fixed amount to the jagirdar and retaining the remainder for themselves. Then the other intermediaries and their farmers

and even officials set themselves up as hereditary owners of villagers. In this way, a class of taluqdars and zamindars arose which usurped proprietary rights and claimed almost sovereign privileges. For instance, inheritance to taluqdari lands came to be governed by laws applicable to kings and not to private individuals, so that there was no division of the estate among heirs on the death of the owner as the Hindu and Muslim laws of inheritance required. These pretensions gave a blow to the central authority and a fillip to anarchy.

CHAPTER THREE

INDIAN POLITICAL SYSTEMS

I THE STATE

Notwithstanding the fact that throughout the medieval period the head of the State in India was a Muslim, the State was not Islamic. Neither in its constitutive principles, nor in its basic conceptions, aims, and ends, did the State follow the injunctions of the holy scriptures—the Quran, the Hadith, or the laws elaborated in the four schools of Sunni jurisprudence. It is a mistake to call the medieval State of India theocratic, for it did not function under the guidance of the Muslim theologians. The personal faith of the ruler had little to do with his public policies.

Almost every one of the Muslim monarchs of India from the thirteenth century onwards expressed his inability and indicated the impossibility of conducting government in accordance with the Shariat. Iltutmish, Balban, Alauddin Khalji and Muhammad Tughlaq were among the pre-Mughal sovereigns of India who questioned the suitability of applying Muslim law to India. Their spokesman, strangely enough, was one of the Ulama—Zia-ud-Din Barni, the historian. In his *Fatawa-i-Jahandari* , which is a work dealing with the principles of politics, he says, "true religion consists in following in the footsteps of the Prophet . . . . But royal government, on the contrary, can only be carried on by following the policies of Khusrau Parvez and the great emperors of Iran." He admits "between the traditions (Sunnat) of the Prophet Muhammad and his mode of life and living, and the customs of the Iranian emperors, and their mode of life and living, there is a complete contradiction and total opposition." But he points out that the Shariat, which is the command of God, could be followed in State matters only in exceptional times. Muhammad succeeded in enforcing *shara* because he was directly inspired by God; the first four Khalifas did so because they had been the associates of the Prophet. But their successors were faced with two irreconcilable alternatives—traditions of the Prophet and the policy of the Iranian emperors. But "prophethood is the perfection of religion and kingship is the perfection of worldly fortune. These two perfections are opposed and contradictory to each

other, and their combination is not within the bounds of possibility."[1]

Iltutmish was approached by some Ulama with the request that as the Hindus were not the people of the Book (*ahl-i-Kitab*) who could be taken under Muslim protection as *dhimmis*, they should be asked to accept Islam and in case of refusal put to the sword. Iltutmish asked his Wazir to give an answer, and he replied that the request was impossible of execution. So far as Balban is concerned Nizam-ud-Din, the historian, observes, "he gave precedence to the affairs of the state (over religion)."[2] Barni states, "in the matter of punishment and exercise of royal authority he acted without fear of God, and whatever he regarded to be in the interest of government irrespective of whether it was in accord with *shara* or not he carried into action."[3] Alauddin's discussion with Qazi Mughis-al-Din is well known. His parting reply to the Qazi was, "whatever I consider to be in the interests of government, and find to be the requirement of the time I order. I do not know what the Exalted God will do to me on the Day of Resurrection."

About Muhammad Tughlaq, Shaikh Abdul Haq asserted that "he had made authority subject to reason, and what was heard subsidiary to what was rational." 'Authority' stands for the Quran and the Hadith, and 'what was heard' for *fiqh*. Barni complained, "the decrees of prophethood and of state were issued from his (Muhammad Tughlaq's) capital and he had combined (in his person) the offices of the King and the Prophet."

Professor Habib concludes, "it is true that Muslim kings, mostly of foreign extraction, sat on Indian thrones for some six or seven centuries. But they could only do so because their enthronement was not the enthronement of "Muslim rule"; had it been otherwise, they could not have lasted for a single generation."[4]

Among the Mughal emperors Babar because he reigned for such a short period, and Humayun because he was so beset with difficulties had little opportunity to pay much attention to administrative matters. Akbar inaugurated a State policy which was not subordinated to the dictates of Islam. He looked upon all religions alike and regarded it his

[1] See *Fatawa-i-Jahandari*, translated by Professor Habib and Dr. Afsar Begum, in the *Medieval India Quarterly*, Vol. III, Nos. 1 & 2, July-October, 1957, p. 55

[2] Nizam-ud-Din Ahmad, *Tabaqat-i-Akbari* (text, edited by B. De), Vol. I, p. 82

[3] Zia Barni, *Tarikh-i-Firoz Shahi* (text)

[4] See *Medieval India Quarterly*, *op. cit.*, p. 5

duty to make no difference between his subjects on the basis of religion. He threw open the highest appointments to non-Muslims. He married Hindu princesses, allowed them to retain their religion and perform Hindu rites in the palace. Their sons were successors to the Mughal throne. He eliminated the interference of Ulama by assuming the authority to give final decisions on religious questions on which there might be conflicting opinions among the Mujtahids (Muslim divines). In many social and other matters he showed respect to the sentiments and traditions of his non-Muslim subjects. Among these the most important was his abolition of Jazia (poll-tax on the Hindus). Abul Fazl says, "Kingship is a gift of God....... And on coming to exalted dignity if he do not inaugurate universal peace (toleration) and if he do not regard all conditions of humanity, and all sects of religion with the single eye of favour—and not bemother some and bestepmother others—he will not become fit for the exalted dignity".[1] Again he adds, "differences in religion must not withhold him from his duty of watching, and all classes of men must have repose, so that the shadow of God may confer glory".[2] "Thus", in the words of Ibn Hasan, "both Islamic law and *Hadis* ceased to be the code of government."[3]

Although Jahangir was not cast in the heroic mould of his father, yet he continued to act upon the spirit of these principles. Shah Jahan in his early years made a departure and even revived some of the worst features of bigotry, but during his later years, he mellowed and his iconoclastic zeal withered away.

Aurangzeb, unfortunately, reversed Akbar's policy, but in spite of his intentions, failed to instal the sovereignty of *shara* (canon law). His forty years of misdirected efforts ended in complete failure. In his last days disappointment and gloom settled upon his soul and he died with forebodings of ruin haunting his mind. After him, his successors abandoned the disastrous course. But by then irreparable damage had been done to the great edifice of the empire.

The Muslim emperors and Sultans of India paid scant attention to Islamic concepts of the State. According to Islamic theory all Muslims constitute a single society (*millat*) and this society needs a single Muslim chief. The idea of a universal society and a universal

[1] Abul Fazl, *Akbar Nama* (translated by Beveridge), Vol. II (Calcutta, 1912), p. 421
[2] *Ibid.*, p. 680
[3] Ibn Hasan, *The Central Structure of the Mughal Empire*, p. 61

State based upon divine law was the essence of Islamic politics. It required an elected head of the State, who was known as the Commander of the Faithful (*amir-ul-mominin* or Khalifa). The person elected to this high office was required to fulfil certain conditions, and on election enjoyed certain privileges. His functions were defending the faith and administering the worldly affairs of the Muslim empire in accordance with the sacred law.

With the flux of time this concept gradually lost its appeal. The Umayyad Khalifas converted the elective office into a hereditary one. Under the Abbasids while the nominal suzerainty of the Khalifa was recognised, the rulers of the provinces set up substantially independent principalities. On the overthrow of the Abbasids by the Mongols in A.D. 1258 even the pretence of allegiance to the Khalifa was abandoned.

Thus Islam was repudiated in its essential principles of universalism of society, State and law. The rulers who set themselves up as sovereigns of their territories were upholders of particularisms based on the customs and traditions of the peoples over whom they exercised authority.

Some of the earlier Indian rulers did render a nominal homage to the Khalifa, but after the middle of the thirteenth century, when Baghdad, the seat of the Caliphate, had fallen into the hands of the Mongols and the Khalifa had taken refuge in Egypt, the linchpin of the Islamic community was broken and in consequence the Islamic polity disappeared.

At the time Babar established his empire in India the Khilafat had passed to the house of Uthman. Babar as a Chaghtai Turk had no respect for the pretensions of the Anatolian Turk. At the same time the Safavis had turned Iran into a Shia kingdom, repudiated the claims of the Sunni Caliphate, and laid claim to almost divine honours, which was impressive indeed.[1] Coming from Central Asia and descending from Changiz Khan through his mother, Babar had the example of Iran on the one side and that of the imperial traditions of the Mongols on the other. Under their influence the Mughal imperial system was evolved.

The Mughal emperors' conception of the nature of their office was Iranian and un-Islamic. The emperor regarded himself not the

[1] See Brown, E. G , *History of Persian Literature in Modern Times*, 1924, p 494; also Levy, *The Social Structure of Islam*, p. 373

elected chief of the Muslim community, nor the representative and subordinate of the Khalifa of the Faithful, but the shadow of God (*zill-i-Allah*). Abul Fazl explains, "Royalty is a light emanating from God, and a ray from the sun... Modern language calls this light *farr-i-izidi* (the divine light), and the tongue of antiquity called it *kiyan khura* (the sublime halo). It is communicated by God to kings without the intermediate assistance of anyone, and men, in the presence of it, bend the forehead of praise towards the ground of submission."[1]

Jahangir held that "acts of sovereignty and world rule are not things to be arranged by the worthless endeavours of a few defective intellects. The just Creator bestows them on him whom he considers fit for this glorious and exalted duty."[2]

Aurangzeb claimed to be the shadow of God, the Khalifa of the age, "the vakil of God on earth," and was reputed to be Alamgir *zinda pir* (Alamgir, the living saint).

These titles and epithets recall the pretensions of the ancient rulers of Iran and Byzantium (*kisra* and *kaisar*) and the attributes of the Hindu monarchs. But they are utterly inconsistent with the Islamic notions of the Caliphate or the Sultanate—elective offices conferred by the *millat* (community). The idea of a hereditary Padshah finds no warrant in Muslim jurisprudence.

The medieval Indian State has been compared with the feudal State of medieval Europe. In reality there is little in common between them. The European State was an aristocratic structure based on a peculiar type of military land tenure. The feudal lords formed a hierarchy of hereditary fief-holders—from the king at the top to the knight at the bottom. On the other hand, the Mughal nobility was a bureaucracy entirely dependent upon the goodwill of the monarch. This nobility had no roots in the soil; it did not consist of hereditary landholders. Not property but birth was the main consideration in its recruitment to office. It was not financially independent. It drew its income from the imperial treasury, either in the form of cash or assignment of land-revenue. The assignments were frequently changed and the wealth of the noblemen was liable to escheat at death. The offices were not hereditary though in later times the tendency was towards hereditary appointments. The aristocracy was more an oligarchic class than a feudal nobility.

[1] Abul Fazl, *Ain-i-Akbari* (translated by Professor Blochmann), Vol I (Calcutta, 1927), p 3

[2] *Tuzuk-i-Jahangiri* (Roger's translation), Vol. I, p 51

Closely examined, the State in medieval India appears to be a strange mixture of limited powers and extensive responsibilities. If its limitations are taken into consideration, then it will be difficult to call it a sovereign State in the modern sense. Modern sovereignty expresses itself through its three organs—the legislature, the executive and the judiciary. The sovereign functions are the making and administering of laws and dispensing justice.

The medieval Indian State had no law-making authority. For the Muslims that function ended with Muhammad, the last of the Prophets, through whom God revealed His will and command once and for all. Divine law needs no addition or modification. Its application to the daily needs of the people is the business of the learned and not that of the head of the State. They expound the law and interpret it to suit the changing conditions and situations of life.

Nor did the Hindus require a law-making body. They had their own ancient codes of law to regulate all aspects of life and learned Pandits like Mitra Misra and Raghunandan wrote commentaries which, independently of the State, guided the Hindu judges (Shastris) in the application of law.

Islamic jurisprudence (*fiqh*) is the knowledge of the divine rules which apply to the actions of man, and prescribe what is obligatory, forbidden, recommended, disapproved or merely permitted, and it is derived from the Quran and the Hadith. Thus Muslim law is all comprehensive and covers all matters connected with the life of the individual and society—personal and private, and public, including civil, criminal and constitutional. Among his strictly private and personal affairs are man's belief, devotion and worship, known as *ibadat*. The Muslim code lays down very strict regulations on these matters. The civil law considers affairs under two main heads—(i) marriage, and (ii) property. Under the first head come questions of consanguinity and eligibility, of widow marriage, and of divorce, and under the second inheritance, purchase and sale, interest and rent. Public laws deal with political matters—Khilafat and government, the relations of the Muslim government with the non-Muslim subjects, the duties of the State towards the Muslims, and with respect to crime and punishment.

So far as *ibadat* is concerned, it is the duty of every Muslim to comply with the rules of *shara*. Some among them, especially the mystics (Sufis), looked upon the rules as mechanical and formal and

therefore while not denying their validity subordinated them to the quest for the realisation of God through the mystic path. In India among the Ulama and Sufis (the learned and the mystic), there were always two groups. One laid stress upon Shariat and regarded deviation from it reprehensible, and the other considered mystical discipline more worthy of attention than adherence to legality. Aurangzeb and Dara Shukoh were the outstanding exponents of the two rival schools.

So far as laws relating to marriage and property were concerned they were generally observed, but large and serious encroachments were made in the spheres of each. The Muslims adopted many Hindu marriage customs, and followed a number of practices which were repugnant to Islamic law. For example, in the matter of fixing the degree of kinship for eligibility in marriage, in prescribing limits of endogamy and exogamy based upon tribal and class divisions, in the observance of ceremonial accompanying the marriage contract. Laws of inheritance were supplanted by custom (*urf*) in many parts of India. Widow marriage and divorce were frowned upon as among the Hindus.[1]

Marriages between Muslims and Hindus were rare, but those among the ruling families were well recognised. The Mughal emperors were not the pioneers of this policy. In Kashmir Hindu-Muslim marriages were of a long standing. Zain-ul-Abidin (1420-70) married the two daughters of Raja Manakdeo of Jammu.[2] Another daughter was married to Raja Jasrath, the Muslim Gakkhar chief.[3]

The Bahmani kings of the Deccan allied themselves with Hindu families. Taj-ud-Din Firuz (1397-1422) married the daughters of Deva Raya of Vijayanagar and Narsingh Rao of Kherla.[4] Ahmad Shah Wali, the ninth Bahmani ruler, wedded the daughter of the Raja of Sonkhed. Yusuf Adil Shah, the Sultan of Bijapur (died A.D. 1510), took to wife the sister of Mukund Rao, a Brahmana, and she became his chief queen. Amir Barid of Bedar (died A.D. 1539) followed the example.[5]

Akbar, Jahangir, Farrukh Siyar, Sulaiman Shukoh, and Sipihr

[1] Vide Tupper, C. L, *Panjab Customary Laws*; Burn, R., *Census of India*, 1901, Vol XVI, Part I, pp 92 et. sq.

[2] See Jonaraja, *Rajatarangini* (translated by J. C. Dutt), p. 86; Srivara, *Zain Rajatarangini* (translated by J C Dutt), p. 194

[3] *The Indian Antiquary*, Vol XXXVI, 1907, p. 8

[4] Sherwani, H K., *The Bahmanis of the Deccan* (1953 edition), p 144 et. sq.

[5] Ranade, M. G, *The Rise of Maratha Power*, p. 31; Briggs, John, *History of the Rise of the Muhammedan Power in India*, Vol. III (Calcutta, 1910), pp 495-6

Shukoh took Hindu princesses for their wives. The Hindu royal family of Kachh formed matrimonial alliances with the Muslims.[1]

On the other side, the Hindu was far too ridden with caste inhibitions to receive a Muslim lady in the innermost sanctum of his palace. Yet marriages between Hindus and Muslims were not unknown. In Rajauri, Ladakh and Baltistan, Jahangir noticed intermarriages between the two communities.[2] The love affair of Peshwa Baji Rao I with Mastani is well known. She was a dancing girl who became the Peshwa's constant companion and "accompanied Baji Rao in his campaigns and rode stirrup to stirrup with him."[3] In 1734 she bore the Peshwa a son, Shamsher Bahadur, who was brought up as a Muslim, the Brahmanas having refused to allow him to enter the Hindu fold. In 1753 Shamsher Bahadur accompanied Raghoba to the north and took part in the fighting before Kumbher and Delhi. In 1755 he led an expedition against the rebel chief Tulaji Angria. He was killed at Panipat in 1761. He was succeeded in his jagir by his son Ali Bahadur. In 1787 when Mahadji Sindhia suffered reverses, reinforcements were despatched from the south under the command of Ali Bahadur as the representative of the Peshwa's house. Ali Bahadur was given secret instructions to negotiate with the Rajputs independently of Sindhia.

It is interesting to note that a number of families possessed both a Hindu and a Muslim branch, and retained through a number of generations their family bond.

Similar laxities applied to the canon law prohibiting *riba* (taking of interest). It was found impossible to enforce it in practice. Many pious Muslims, however, refused to draw interest and men of easier conscience had recourse to ingenious stratagems to strike a bargain between God and Mammon.

Muslim criminal law was exceedingly difficult to execute. The conditions laid down for the proof of crime were in many cases impossible of fulfilment. For example, conviction for rape required the testimony of four witnesses. Punishments were extraordinarily cruel—cutting off of limbs for theft, stoning and whipping for adultery, and death for apostasy. Curiously murder was not treated as a crime against society but a wrong to the individual and his

[1] Sarkar, Jadunath, *History of Aurangzib*, Vol II, p 163, footnote
[2] *Tuzuk-i-Jahangiri*, (Roger's translation) Vol. II, p 181
[3] *Tarikh-i-Muhammad Shahi*, quoted by Sardesai, G S., *New History of the Marathas*, Vol II, p 178

family. So while the fact of the offence was determined by the judge, its punishment was left to the choice of the relations of the victim. They might demand the execution of the murderer or accept blood money.

In India it was realised that the requirements of the law were hard to fulfil and therefore much of criminal administration passed out of the jurisdiction of the Qazi to the State officials.

The laws relating to the constitution of government and the definition of its functions had hardly any validity in India. Both the legists and practical statesmen had recognised the unsuitability of the Shariat law for Indian conditions. Nor was it possible to follow the traditions of the pious Khalifas in matters like the organisation of the services and the army, or in levying taxation and land-revenue.

Under the Muslim system as established by the early Khalifas the principal sources of the revenue of the State were divided into two kinds. The Muslims had to pay Zakat or alms-tax, and Kharaj or the land-tax, and the non-Muslims under the protection of the State paid the Jazia and Kharaj.

In India Zakat was seldom collected by the State and for the purposes of public finance was practically non-existent. Land-tax was common to all the subjects of the State and its incidence was the same for everybody. But the methods of its assessment and collection were naturally different from those obtaining under the lands of the Caliphate. The Indian system was essentially Hindu with modifications introduced as a result of Indian experience.

The Jazia was intermittently imposed. In pre-Mughal times, Firoz Tughlaq and Sikandar Lodi had levied it. Then it remained in abeyance from 1569 to 1673. Aurangzeb revived the out-moded practices of the fourteenth and fifteenth centuries. But he did not realise that the Jazia was bad law as well as bad economics and bad politics.

Aurangzeb's imposition of the Jazia was bad in law as it was contrary to the Muslim traditions in India, and it contravened the conditions under which it ought to have been levied. According to Muslim jurisprudence its payment is an incidence of a contract between two parties, and is conditional on the fulfilment of the terms by the two. One party is the commander of the Muslims and the other the non-Muslim people. It derives its sanction from the Quran[1] which lays down that it is the duty of the Muslims "to fight them that

[1] *Sura* IX—29

believe not in God...and do not profess the true religion, those that have a scripture, until they pay the Jazia in person in subjection."

The Prophet and his immediate successors, the four Pious Khalifas, entered into agreements with the Jews, the Christians and later with the Zoroastrians, and gave effect to the Quranic injunction. These precedents form the basis of the Muslim law on the subject.

The law is that the non-Muslims who accept Muslim rule, are the *dhimmis*. "The word '*dhimmi*' means a compact which the Muslim agrees to respect, the violation of which makes him liable to *dhamm* (blame)." This compact secures to the non-Muslim certain rights which the Muslim State must protect. The rights include the security of life and property and an indefinite *aman* (guarantee). The liabilities of the *dhimmi* in return are the payment of the Jazia as a price of protection, and avoidance of action harmful to Muslim interests. The compact also exempts the *dhimmis* from partaking in war. The amount of the Jazia varied, but finally it was fixed at the rates of 12, 24 and 48 *dirhems* depending on the *dhimmi's* capacity to pay. Those unable to fight were not required to pay. Thus old men, women, children and the disabled were exempt. Muhammad bin Qasim had included the Brahmanas in this category, but Firoz Tughlaq excluded them.

Muhammad's pact with the Jews only required them to contribute to the expenses of war, but they were not allowed to join the army in fight. He issued similar charters to the Peoples of the Book in the different parts of Arabia. In return for the payment of the Jazia the Christians of Najran were promised protection and the security of "their lives, property, lands, creed, those absent and those present, their families, their churches, and all they possess. No bishop shall be forced to abandon his priestly life. No hardships or humiliation shall be imposed on them."[1]

Abu Bakr and Umar made similar agreements with the Christians of Iraq and Syria. There are cases on record when the Khalifa remitted the Jazia and returned the money because he could not guarantee the defence of the *dhimmis*. There were cases, too, in which the *dhimmis* were absolved from payment because they were required to take part in war.[2]

The later theologian-jurists departed from the original spirit

[1] Abu Yusuf, *Kitab al-Kharaj*, pp. 72-3
[2] Baladhuri, *Futuh al-Buldan*

underlying the levy of Jazia and drew up elaborate rules. They were summed up under twelve heads, of which the provisions under six were compulsory, so that the breach of any one revoked the compact. The other six laid down the duties and liabilities which were considered desirable. The latter category includes rules about the wearing of distinctive clothes by the *dhimmis*, riding on horseback, ringing church bells loudly and burying the dead in a Muslim graveyard. Later other vexatious measures were added, for example, prohibition to build new shrines and to repair old ones, and the requirement that the Jazia be paid in person and with due humility. In order to give support to these intolerant demands a document known as the Covenant of Umar was put into circulation. But there are doubts about its authenticity.[1]

Aurangzeb's measure was a breach of the implicit agreement existing since the days of Akbar. It was legally invalid because he required the Hindus to pay and yet fight in his wars against both his Muslim and Hindu foes—against the Muslims of Central Asia, Afghanistan and the Deccan, and against the Marathas, who were Hindus.

The Jazia was bad economics, for it weighed most heavily upon those least able to bear it. The poorest class of individual whose property was worth less than Rs. 52 per annum had to pay Rs. 3-2-0 a year; the middle class consisting of persons who earned between Rs. 52 and Rs. 2,500 had to pay Rs. 6-4-0 per annum; but those receiving more than Rs. 2,500 a year paid only Rs. 12-8-0 per annum. This was opposed to all canons of sound finance.

It was bad politics. The poor were mulcted mercilessly and the rich were treated lightly. But the poor were the rural folk for whom the Jazia was one of the many cesses that they were condemned in any case to pay. It was collected along with other dues. The Hindu Muqaddams and zamindars realised it from the Hindu tenants and paid it to the imperial officers. It was a hardship but not a humiliation. On the other hand, though the Jazia was not much of an economic inconvenience in the cities, it carried with it the stigma of inferiority and it might be accompanied with indignities from malicious zealots. It touched the upper castes to the quick, and created bitter resentment.

Other taxes which discriminated between the Muslims and the

[1] See Majid Khadduri, *War and Peace in the Law of Islam*, p. 194

non-Muslims were equally uncalled for and equally unlawful. Such were customs and trade taxes, which discriminated between Hindu and Muslim traders.

II. JUSTICE

The judicial activity of the State was extremely limited. It affected the non-Muslims in a very restricted sphere. Aurangzeb recognised that "the non-Muslim subjects that is, the *Zhimmis*, are not subject to the laws of Islam; their affairs should be regulated according to the principles of their own religion."[1] Only in criminal matters the Hindus appeared before the Qazis. But so far as crime was concerned all that the judges were required to do was to declare the criminal, but what punishment should be meted out depended upon the plaintiff. Then the vast majority of both Hindus and Muslims who lived in the villages had to be content with village justice where the judges (Qazis) were not officers appointed by the State.

The judicial organisation was quite unlike the one known to Europe or to present day India. There was no hierarchy of courts with graded jurisdictions. Every judge (Qazi) was both a court of first instance as well as a court of appeal. In fact, appellate jurisdiction in the proper sense was unknown, although retrial in a court other than the original one was permissible. The judge had the powers both of enquiry and investigation and of sentence. Every Qazi was competent to hear civil and criminal cases, petty or great, without limits on jurisdiction in property or crime. Cases under both canon law and common law came before him.

The administration of judicial officers was confined to the cities and the larger towns—the capital of the empire, the headquarters of the provinces, districts (sarkars) and subdivisions (parganas). The emperor appointed the Chief Qazi (*qazi-ul-quzat*) of the empire and the provincial Qazis. The Qazis of the districts and sub-divisions were appointed under the royal Sanad, and the letters of appointment were issued by the Chief Qazi's department. A Qazi once appointed was seldom transferred and the office tended to be a life tenure. The usual method of remunerating them was by conferment of free lands.

The striking feature of the system was that apart from the making of appointments the State had hardly anything to do with judicial

[1] Vide *Fatawa-i-Alamgiri*, quoted by M. B. Ahmad in *Administration of Justice in Medieval India* (1940 edition), p 101

administration. There appeared to be complete separation between the executive and the judiciary, although the emperor remained the fountain of justice and he and his representatives in the provinces considered it a matter of duty to hear complaints and repress wrong-doing.

In the circumstances, the executive function was the most conspicuous manifestation of sovereignty. This was natural. But authority everywhere is encircled with a penumbra of anarchy. In Asian countries its shadows were deep and were always gathering over the horizon. A little breeze was enough to bring them scurrying over the land to enshroud it in darkness. Watchfulness, promptitude, decision and firmness in action were qualities demanded by the situation. These needs could only be met by strengthening the executive arm. The threat to the stability, nay to the very existence of government, was constant. From the commencement of the empire of the Turks in the early thirteenth century till the overthrow of the Lodi Sultanate, five dynasties had held sway over India with an average of sixty years for the rule of each. During this period there had been long intervals of alarm—the Mongol menace and Timur's lightning raid.

The executive had to be armed, therefore, with all powers and provided with the amplest resources. But the human mind is not satisfied with purely utilitarian justifications and moral reasons had to be discovered to justify the authority of the executive. Again the manifestation of overwhelming power is always impressive. It evokes feelings of awe and reverence. So inevitably the monarchy was invested with an aura of divinity. It was necessary that the bearer of authority should have the sense of a mission in order to provide for the subjects of authority the proper motivation for restraining the beast in them and for sustaining their sentiments of loyalty.

The attributes of authority in their extent and limitations tended to emphasise its personal aspect. The person of the wielder of power was divine. It was the outward symbol of political authority, the embodiment and manifestation of the State's sovereignty and force. The person was the centre of the loyalty of his subjects, and the rallying focus for his army. The commanders of the troops, the officers of government, the nobility, the learned, the artists and the poets were all bound to his personality and dependent upon his benevolence.

The king or the emperor and his court played the most important

role in the social, political and cultural life of the country. Unfortunately the exaltation of the person of the monarch fostered sycophancy and discouraged independence of thought and action. The arrangements in the durbar and the etiquette observed there seemed to imitate the ritual of worship in a temple. The monarch was seated on a throne studded with jewels under a silken canopy embroidered with threads of silver and gold, placed upon a platform high above the throng of courtiers, petitioners, and seekers of favours. An atmosphere of obsequiousness and flattery enveloped the scene. Bernier, who was an eye-witness of such durbars, describes how the courtiers would raise their hands up towards the sky and exclaim "miraculous! "miraculous!" at every word that fell from the lips of the exalted personage. The habit had become so ingrained in society that a nobleman who requested Bernier to undertake his treatment would address him as the Aristotle, Hippocrates and Avicenna of the age.

Thus the medieval Indian ruler came to be looked upon as the embodiment of power. Power logically implied army and revenue. The two were the essentials of executive authority. Besides there were ornamental elements too, the frills which hide the nakedness of force, for example, the promotion of arts and crafts, literature and science, religion and charity, festivals and amusements.

But the medieval State evinced little interest in trade and industry and in the social and economic life of the people. It was, however, the canonical duty of a Muslim ruler to enforce upon the Muslims conformity with Islamic prohibitions and injunctions.

Although pomp and pageantry surrounded the monarchy, its sphere of activity was severely limited. Its authority was not shared, and therefore the monarch remained isolated. Not many were interested in his fortunes and the bonds which kept his followers together were never strong. He was surrounded with jealous rivals. They belonged to the circle of his closest relations and associates. Kingship indeed knew no kinship. In these conditions men of extraordinary genius alone could hold their heads aloft. The weak in intellect or character speedily went to the wall. Kingship was hereditary. But as there were no means of ensuring genius in heredity, each monarch who acceded to the throne had to prove his right. This imparted instability to the State and accounts for the wars of succession and rapid changes of dynasties.

III GOVERNMENT AND ADMINISTRATION

The growth of the Mughal administrative system took place under three formative influences. Two were foreign and one indigenous. The foreign elements came from the home of the Mughal rulers, viz. Central Asia, where the nomadic civilisation of the Mongols met the sedentary civilisation of Iran. The Mughals inherited this dual strain. Their ideas of the State and of the position of its head were derived from Iran. Also their culture—language, literature, philosophy and intellectual and aesthetic outlook—was dominated by Iran. But in their military organisation they followed the traditions of the Mongols, as they did in framing the cadre of their services.

India provided them with the basis of their financial administration and land-revenue system.

The basis of the Mughal government was the army. The monarch was its commander-in-chief and his ministers were its officers. All the services were military for there was no distinction between civil and military officials. All officers belonged to one unified military cadre. The imperial headquarters, whether at the capital or on the march, were known as *urdu-e-mualla*—the exalted camp.

The whole organisation was modelled on the Mongol pattern. The Mongol forces were divided according to the decimal system. The lowest rank was that of the commander of ten troopers and the higher ones were those of the commander of a hundred, a thousand, ten thousand and a hundred thousand horsemen. The Mongols were nomads and so they were not tied down to cultivated lands. Their herds of sheep and horses were their wealth and the limits of their pasture-tracts defined their jurisdiction. The officers and retainers subsisted on them, but supplemented their resources by the product of their forays.

In India conditions were different and the nomadic conception of the army had to adjust itself to the agricultural economy which prevailed here. The army was organised on the model of the Mongols in decimal commands called mansabs. These were divided into thirty-three grades, from the grade of ten to that of five thousand for the nobles. But there were higher grades for the princes. The salary of a mansabdar was fixed so as to cover the expenses of maintaining his personal establishment, the pay of the troopers under his command, and the upkeep of transport. This salary was either paid in cash from the imperial treasury or by means of assignment of the revenue of estates.

The mansabdars provided the bulk of the fighting forces of the empire. Each mansabdar was responsible for the recruitment and maintenance of the quota fixed for him. Naturally the mansabdar's choice of retainers was influenced by communal group considerations. Thus the Mughal officers would choose Mughal followers, the Persians form contingents of the Persians, and the Pathan mansabdars would gather under their banner Pathans. A certain amount of mixed recruitment was, however, allowed.

The troopers were not necessarily tenants of the jagirs attached to a mansab. Many of them belonged to the floating population of the cities and immigrants from across the Indus who were always welcome. In the battle array each group would take its position under the standards of its tribal chiefs.

An army so organised had obvious defects. It lacked unity; it could not act as a well-knit organism moving under the command of one will. It was basically an army of mercenaries, of men belonging to military clans, castes and families who joined the profession of arms because it offered them opportunities of employment and of loot. It was not inspired by any high principles. Its morale depended upon the leader.

The Mughal army was not organised on feudal lines. Its commanders were not hereditary landowners, under whom their knights and retainers held lands and served. They were employed on the basis of personal merit and through the favour of the king or some other high-ranking officer, family traditions being the main recommendation. They were only entitled to receive the amount of their salary from the State in the form of cash or assignment of land-revenue. Thus so long as the Mughal government retained its vigour, a hereditary landed aristocracy did not grow.

The only hereditary nobility was predominantly Hindu. It consisted of zamindars who were descendants of the old Hindu ruling families. They had bowed before the conqueror, accepted his superior authority and retained their estates on condition of paying tribute. They were related to the State by a cash nexus; otherwise they had little interest in its fortunes.

The preponderance of Hindu zamindars is shown by the distribution of zamindaris in Uttar Pradesh at the end of the sixteenth century and in the middle of the nineteenth century. The figures show that the region situated at the centre of the empire was very

largely in the hands of Rajput zamindars. In the sixteenth century entire districts were under their control, but by the middle of the nineteenth century, although they were still in a dominant position, the Jats, Gujars, Ahirs, Muslims and other castes had carved out estates for themselves.[1]

It is surprising that the Muslim zamindars were in a small minority, both at the commencement of the period and towards its end. The few Muslim families which had acquired lands were either descended from officers of pre-Mughal regimes, or free lances who had taken possession of lands by force. None of the Mughal captains who came with Babar settled upon land. But as time passed and as imperial supervision slackened, offices tended to become hereditary and transfers of jagirdars infrequent. In the eighteenth century a whole host of landholders sprang into being, claiming proprietary rights The old zamindars extended their estates, the farmers (*ijaredars*) converted themselves into permanent recipients of revenue and jagirdars settled down upon their assignments.

The condition of Bengal, at the time of the transfer of the Diwani of the province to the East India Company, again indicates the predominance of Hindu zamindars. It may reasonably be concluded that in the whole of India, excepting the western Panjab, superior rights in land had come to vest in the hands of the Hindus.

The Mughal nobility was only a hierarchy of salaried officials originally. They did not constitute a feudal baronage like the one England had. The absence of a hereditary aristocracy deprived the State of a permanent and stabilising basis of power. The people had no shield against the tyranny of an erratic and arrogant monarch and the monarch had no dependable support in times of stress and adversity. The ship of the State was without ballast, at the mercy of winds and waves.

IV. THE PEOPLE

The subjects of the empire were divided into two classes. The upper class to which the ruling group belonged consisted of the superior castes of the Muslims and the Hindus. The Saiyids, Mughals, Iranis, Pathans (or Afghans) and Shaikhs formed the superior class among the Muslims; Rajputs, Brahmanas, Khattris and Kayasthas

[1] Vide Elliot and Beames, *Memoirs on the History, Folk-lore and Distribution of Races of N W P*, Vol II, maps for the years 1596 and 1844, pp 202-3

among the Hindus. The Saiyids and the Brahmanas constituted the non-military wing of the ruling class. The Mughal State was an upper class State of which the army and the services were the two pillars. Both were monopolised by the military section of the upper classes—Mughals, Iranis, Pathans and Rajputs. An analysis of the list of mansabdars of the empire bears this out. The *Maasir-ul-Umara*, which contains a list of the mansabdars of the higher ranks from the reign of Akbar to that of Shah Alam, enumerates 636 Muslim and 87 Hindu officers. Among the Muslims the Mughals and Pathans are in an overwhelming majority (570). There are only a few Saiyids (33) and fewer Shaikhs (25). Similarly among the Hindus, with the exception of about half a dozen, all are Rajputs from Rajputana, the midlands, Bundelkhand and Maharashtra. Evidently the Mughal emperors had anticipated the policy of employing only the martial races in the army—a policy which became the corner-stone of the military organisation of the British in India.

The Saiyids were given employment in the judicial department, for they belonged to the class whose occupation was learning and teaching. Similarly the Brahmanas were employed to assist the Qazis in the dispensation of justice. The land-revenue and finance departments extended their patronage to Kayasthas who belonged to the educated classes of the Hindus.

The other Hindu and Muslim castes which constituted the vast majority of the population were engaged in pursuits which were regarded as unworthy of the higher classes—agriculture, industry and trade. They were the unprivileged subjects of the State and had no part or lot in the administration. Naturally they showed little interest in the affairs of the State and were indifferent to its vicissitudes.

Evidently the spirit of the Hindu social organisation pervaded the working of the empire, for the idea of caste had taken deep root among the Muslims and was the basis of the administrative structure of the empire. In the Hindu system, the Kshatriya was the protector and sustainer of the social order, so much so that he claimed even to determine and alter the status of the other castes. There were quite a number of instances in which the Rajput rulers of the hill states in the Panjab and the rulers of Maharashtra had raised or degraded the status of individuals and groups. The Brahmanas were ministers of religion. They were not the guardians of the social system. One of their functions was to find suitable pedigrees and genealogies for the

Maratha Sardars or other clients who desired to find a Rajput ancestry.

The Mughal emperors were like the Kshatriya kings whose duty it was to uphold the social order. According to Abul Fazl, society consisted of four classes—the warriors, the merchants and artificers, the learned and the husbandmen. "It is therefore obligatory for a king to put each of these in its proper place, and by uniting personal ability with due respect for others, to cause the world to flourish. And as the grand political body maintains its equilibrium by the above four ranks of men, so does royalty receive its final tint from a similar fourfold division (of nobles, revenue officials, intellectuals or philosophers, and servants)."[1]

Among the four orders mentioned by Abul Fazl, the warriors constituted the backbone of the State. Next to them in importance were the learned. To this class belonged scholars, jurists, theologians, teachers, writers and poets. It was the duty of the State to support them. The rulers took pride in making their courts centres of learning. They liked to be considered patrons of arts and sciences, and were eager to give recognition and reward to men who had attained fame in poetry, theology, history, literature or science. The Muslim Ulama naturally enjoyed the major part of this patronage. But the Hindus were not neglected. Eminent Sanskrit scholars and Hindi poets were attached to the court of every emperor and were recipients of royal favours. Hindu astrologers and jurists were always in demand.

Small as the educated class was it exercised enormous influence. Like the clergy and the monks of medieval Europe, the Ulama, the Pandits, and the Hindu and Muslim clerics and monks commanded great respect. But unlike their Western prototypes, they did not form part of any organised body. Neither Islam nor Hinduism evolved an established Church, and neither seemed to have felt the need of a supreme religious authority whose judgements on controversial questions could be considered final. The written texts of dogma and law were there and any one was considered competent—if he possessed the requisite knowledge of Arabic to interpret them. The texts were comprehensive enough to provide guidance for all aspects of the life of the community and the individual.

The situation was not very different among the Hindus. Only the Muslims did not bar anyone from the study of the sacred laws, but among the Hindus only the Brahmanas were authorised to interpret

[1] *Ain-i-Akbari* (translated by Blochmann, second edition), Vol I, p. 4

the scriptures. In practice, however, among the Muslims interpretation was confined to the learned class which consisted largely of the Saiyids. Among the Brahmanas only a small number devoted itself to study and teaching ; the majority followed other occupations—agriculture, trade and service.

The Ulama or the theologian-jurists exercised their influence in two ways. As Qazis and Muftis they were concerned with the administration of justice and their decisions on points of law formed precedents. The more learned a Qazi was the greater respect he commanded. But they were also guides and counsellors of the people and the princes. They had two means of admonition and advice; either through sermons delivered from the pulpit in the mosques or through private audiences in the council chambers of the rulers. Then they were the teachers of the young in the schools and the authors of books—both powerful agencies of propaganda. In the Middle Ages knowledge and education were steeped in theology and teachers and writers enjoyed enormous prestige as propounders of religious dogma and doctrine.

Related to the Ulama were the mystics—the Sufis and the Darweshes. Among the Ulama many led pious, other-worldly and ascetical lives, but others were worldly-wise men—egotistic intellectuals, logic-chopping legists concerned mainly with their own advancement. Balban called them *ulama-e-zahiri* (externalist schoolmen), as opposed to the *ulama-e-batini* (men of spiritual knowledge). The religious men who had renounced the world and taken to the path of contemplation and spiritual discipline had many among them who were profoundly learned. But a large number of scamps and libertines had taken refuge in the circle of Sufis and assumed the garb of hypocrisy. Especially in the eighteenth century the genuinely earnest were few and impostors and charlatans many. In fact the decline of genuine mysticism was one of the marked traits of the general relaxation of moral earnestness in the eighteenth century.

There were a number of orders (*silsilahs*) of these Sufis—Chishtia, Suhravardia, Naqshbandia, Qadiriya, etc. Every high class Musalman regarded it his duty to belong to one of these orders, to swear homage to the head of the order in his locality and to seek his advice on religious problems and even in the general conduct of his life.

Conditions in Hindu India were similar. The Brahmana Pandits,

the heads of sanyasi orders and religious sects played the same part as the Ulama and the religious heads among the Muslims.

Unfortunately the two groups lived in almost complete isolation from one another. Religion, language, customs and general conditions prevented mutual intercourse. They formed two worlds apart. They were divided by impenetrable mental walls. Occasionally a Zain-ul-Abidin, an Akbar or a Dara Shukoh might seek to pull them down; sometimes a Muslim Darwesh and a Hindu yogi might meet and exchange views: otherwise the gulf between the sacerdotal groups of the two communities remained wide.

For instance, the number of Muslims who learnt the Sanskrit language and studied Sanskrit literature, science and philosophy was extremely limited. Although persistent efforts were made to acquaint the Muslim with Sanskrit works through Persian translations, from the times of Firoz Tughlaq onwards and more systematically by the Mughal emperors, the writings of the Muslim authors do not show much familiarity with them. Many Hindus, however, acquired the knowledge of Persian and some of Arabic also; but the Pandits, on the whole, kept themselves aloof and their books written in Sanskrit almost completely ignore the Persian and Arabic literatures.

Between the higher thought of the two communities there yawned an abyss which appeared difficult to span. It is amazing that out of sheer pride the intellectuals on either side showed so little curiosity to know what the other thought. This had grievous consequences which unfolded themselves in later times.

But outside the narrow circles of the Ulama and the Pandits there was an abundance of give and take. The leaders of the *bhakti* movement among the Hindus and a section of the Sufis and scholars among the Muslims sought to transcend the differences of dogma, doctrine and ritual and strove to discover a common basis for spiritual life. They desired to rise above the exclusiveness and pride of the narrow-minded formalists who were intolerant claimants of a monopoly in righteousness. They endeavoured to establish love, amity and good-will among men.

It is not surprising that a majority of these devoted messengers of tolerance belonged to castes other than Brahmana. Kabir was a weaver, Nanak a Bedi Khattri, Raidas a cobbler, Dhanna a Jat, Sena a barber, Sundardas a Bania, Malukdas a Khattri, Birbhana, Babalal and Pran Nath Kshatriyas, Dharnidas a Kayastha, Jagjivan

Das a Thakur, Bulla Sahib a Kunbi, etc. In Maharashtra Namdeva was a tailor, Jnaneshwar an out-caste Brahmana, Chokha Mela a Mahar, Tukaram a Shudra. In the south, Vemana was a peasant and Tiruvalluvar a Pariah. In Bengal, although Chaitanya was born in a Brahmana family his disciples came from the lowest strata of Hindu society and even from among Musalmans.

Among the Muslims also there were groups and individuals who were anxious to understand Hindu philosophy and religion. Their hearts were full of the milk of human kindness, for they desired to attract people towards them and invite them to their faith by their piety, love, unselfish service and other-worldliness. Their freedom from prejudices based on differences of birth and wealth and their sympathy for the poor and the oppressed drew to them peoples of all types and conditions. Of such men the members of the Chishtia order were the most prominent. Muin-ud-Din Chishti, who was the founder of the order in India, arrived here during the reign of Prithviraj Chauhan and settled at Ajmer. When northern India passed under Turkish rule and Delhi became the capital, the Chishtia centre was transferred to Delhi. The order produced some remarkable personalities, for example, Qutub-ud-Din Bakhtiyarkaki, Nizam-ud-Din Aulia, Baba Farid Shakarganj and Shaikh Salim Chishti.

They held religious discussions with Hindu yogis and showed appreciation of their point of view. Through this association many features of the Hindu yoga became part of the Islamic *dhikr* (religious exercise). Nizam-ud-Din expressed the attitude of this school towards the Hindu when on seeing some people worshipping idols he said, "every nation has its own path, its own religion and its own Mecca". He advised his disciple Nasir-ud-Din Chiragh-i-Delhi "to live among the people, submitting to their cruelties and blows and responding to them with humility, generosity and kindness". Professor Habib has pointed out that "converting non-Muslims was no part of the mission of *Chishti Silsilah*".[1]

Shah Wali Ullah, who is regarded as one of the most learned theologians of India in the eighteenth century, expressed the view that "the religion of all is one, the differences relate to laws and regulations only".[2]

Another group was the Qadiria order. The founder of the order

[1] *The Islamic Culture*, April 1946, p. 940

[2] Shah Wali Ullah, *Hujjat Allah-al-Balighah*, Urdu translation by Abu Muhammad Abdul Haq Huqqani, p 182

was Abdul Qadir-al-Jilani who lived in Baghdad in the twelfth century. His system of beliefs, rites and practices differs from that of the other orders. He was regarded by some of his followers as God. In India the order was introduced in the sixteenth century, and its most eminent teacher was Mian Mir (Miranji), who admitted Prince Dara Shukoh as a disciple.

Apart from the organised bodies there were a number of unattached individuals whose attitude was tolerant and even friendly towards other faiths. Among them were Shaikh Nur-ud-Din Rishi, Abul Fazl, Faizi, Muhibullah Allahabadi, Mazhar Jan Janan and many others.

The upsurge of the religion of love and devotion during the period of Muslim rule led to the establishment of many reformed sects. It appears as if the pent up sources of energy were released. An impetus was given to men's aspirations and their minds were uplifted. In the beginning the urge of this impulse was felt in religion which became suffused with mysticism; later it overflowed into political channels. In the eighteenth century, however, the religious and ethical content of this energy dwindled and its force was largely spent in the realisation of worldly glory, although lip-service continued to be paid to spiritual life. It is an interesting phenomenon of the times that the distinction between divine and carnal love was almost obliterated, that ascetic exercises and sensual pleasures went hand in hand, and that the profession of the highest philosophy was compatible with the grossest superstition.

For more than two centuries a strange fervour and exaltation had thrilled the people, and was an important factor in the wonderful achievements of the Mughal empire. Gradually the impulse weakened and it failed to evoke any new ideas of corporate life, or to create a new form of social organisation.

In Europe the Reformation gave birth to the ideas of State sovereignty and democratic society; in India the *bhakti* movement remained politically sterile. The individual was stimulated to better life, but society as a whole remained stationary. When the centralising force of the Mughal empire became exhausted, society fell apart. In the event a confused and agitated mass riven by internal strife had to face the challenge of the West.

The people of India showed little advance in their social organisation during the Middle Ages. In none of its important social

aspects did corporate life achieve a high order. In religion grouping was limited to small sects and fraternities. Neither the Hindus nor the Muslims evolved a real and effective consciousness of unity among the followers of the creed on even a regional scale. The Sikhs alone were an exception. On the social plane, the sub-caste and the clan prescribed the limit of fellowship. The Mughal and the Pathan, the Turani and the Irani, lived apart without conscious effort to cooperate. The Hindus were no better; in fact they were worse. For both, the village constituted the self-sufficient unit of economy and rather slender threads linked it with the wider community.

The political interests of the village were extremely narrow. The villages looked upon the State as a remote, almost alien and undoubtedly harsh reality, which was ineluctable. They had to suffer it but not to identify themselves with it. Its strength was like a double-edged sword—cause of fortune as of woe. Its weakness was their opportunity. The State was an abstraction beyond their comprehension. The personality of the ruler evoked among them a feeling of gratitude if the monarch was just, generous and sympathetic, otherwise they endured him with patience as God's punishment for their sins.

Politically the Indian empires were conglomerations of more or less autonomous units. The direct relations of the empire with the people were tenuous because its functions and activities were severely restricted. So long as a vigorous ruler remained at the helm of affairs he succeeded in imparting a unity to the population, and creating orderly conditions which were quickly availed of by the people to build up the structure of a resplendent civilisation. But the absence of a great personality to guide the affairs of the State equally swiftly brought the edifice to ruin.

V. THE FAILURE OF THE RULING CLASSES

The eighteenth century marked the decline and fall of the Mughal empire. There appeared a number of competitors for succession. In the first category were the Muslim governors of the provinces. Among them the important ones were the Nizam who ruled over the six subahs of the Deccan, the Nawab of Bengal whose domain included the provinces of Bengal, Bihar and Orissa, and the Nawab of Oudh whose territories extended over the lower Doab and the submontane region north of the Ganga river.

Next came the Hindu tribal chiefs—the Rajputs, the Jats and the Marathas. The Sikhs appeared upon the scene last and it is doubtful whether they entertained the ambition to rule over all India from Delhi. Then there were neighbouring chiefs who had supplied ruling dynasties in the past. In the eighteenth century Nadir Shah or Ahmad Shah Abdali were likely aspirants to the Mughal throne. What no one could have foreseen, but what actually came to pass, was the appearance upon the scene of a foreign race with its homeland several thousand miles away and separated from India by vast oceans, which entered the race with the other competitors, won it and inherited the empire of the Mughals.

Why the Mughal empire failed to preserve its integrity; why the Indian chiefs lost the succession; why the land neighbours of India missed the chance to repeat the exploits of their predecessors, are questions which have to be answered before it is possible to understand the why and wherefore of Britain's triumph.

Now it is a truism to state that the rise and fall of empires is directly related to the competence of the ruling elements. So long as these elements retain their virtue, the State organism remains healthy and vigorous, but with its loss debility, disease and death follow. Virtue is statesmanship. "In essence it is the capacity to face challenges and to overcome them. It is the power of correctly calculating and skilfully utilising the forces of one's age and country so as to make them contribute to the success of one's policy." The fundamental fact of every government, whatever its form—monarchy, oligarchy or democracy—is that it rests on a delicate balance of political forces exercising pulls in different directions. In democracies the base of government is broad, and therefore the limits within which its balance may not be upset are sufficiently wide. The democratic State is a highly complex organism, whose connecting tissues are embedded throughout the body politic. They distribute the impact of strains and stresses over a wide area and thus help in maintaining the stability of the State. Democracy has discovered the means of overcoming its political vicissitudes peacefully, so that a change of government is not ordinarily accompanied by violence, bloodshed, and fear of dissolution.

Such stabilising and shock-absorbing devices were unknown to the monarchic States of the type that existed in medieval India. Their support was limited to a microscopic minority among their

subjects, with the result that their regime was unstable and insecure. The situation was so perilous that only the possession of the highest virtue could guarantee existence. This was a requirement not easy to fulfil. Medieval reliance upon heredity to ensure the proper quality of virtue proved untrustworthy time and again, but no other peaceful method of discovering the needed talent was available.

The belief that virtue ran in the blood was so deep rooted that recourse was had to myths in order to find a suitable ancestry for the occupant of the throne. The Mughal emperors were proud of their descent from two world conquerors—Chengiz and Timur. Shivaji was provided with a genealogy linking him to the Sisodias of the Solar race. The Jats claimed to have sprung from Sri Krishna of the Yadu race. The Bahmani Sultans were connected with the greatest Persian dynasty, that of Bahman to Isfandiyar. Repeated evidence of the fallaciousness of the theory had no effect.

The belief continued to influence the choice of successors, although the pitiless logic of the transfer of power could not be denied. The rivalry of royal princes was an expression of this logic. But this rivalry led to wars of succession, which periodically shook the foundations of the State and eventually brought about its disruption.

The virtue of the prince, or in other words his capacity to rule, was the dominant factor in determining the fate of government. Next in importance was the character of the support which the prince received from the elements of society which participated in politics. It has been explained above that the Mughal State was an upper-caste State—the upper castes consisting of men of the sword and men of the pen. Yet they together provided a very narrow basis for the State edifice. It is difficult to estimate their numbers in those times. Today they constitute about ten per cent of the population. But this is a deceptive figure, for it includes large numbers who have little to do with government. The figures of the number of landholders who were expected to render service to the State are not available for the eighteenth century. But according to the calculations of Sharma,[1] there were 14,556 mansabdars in the reign of Aurangzeb in 1690. They constituted the upper cadre of the administrative services. Besides them, there were a number of others who were not included in the mansabdars' list, but served the government in

[1] Sharma, S R, *The Religious Policy of the Mughal Emperors*, pp 131-32

subordinate offices or non-military posts (Qazis, etc.). All of them were landholders attached to the government. Apart from them there were many hereditary Hindu zamindars who were not closely associated with the government. These facts point to the conclusion that the Mughal emperors could not count upon any large active support and that their dependants constituted a small body. Even the Czars of Russia appear to have commanded a larger body of dependants, for according to Stalin, there were about 1,30,000 members of the landed aristocracy at their back. According to Bernier,[1] the ratio of the better sort of people to the masses in Delhi was from two to three out of ten individuals, whereas at that time in Paris it was from seven to eight.

Besides its structural character, the manner of its functioning also determined the period of the State's existence. Pursuit of correct policies made it strong, the contrary course enfeebled it.

Among the Mughals a succession of unusually able men held the reins of office for several generations. Babar, the founder of the empire, possessed the uncommon combination of qualities of soldier, statesman and litterateur. Humayun was different from his father, but was warm-hearted, ab e and intellectual. Akbar was a genius of the highest order, a brilliant organiser, a far-sighted statesman, skilful general, and a fearless and sincere seeker after truth. Jahangir, though a lover of ease and luxury, possessed enough capacity to continue the system evolved by his great father. Shah Jahan was fitful and unsteady, but he was capable of recognising merit, selecting efficient men and following the path of moderation. Aurangzeb was unique both in his virtues and vices. In personal character he was the model of piety. He was the only emperor who was free from indulgence in wine, woman, and song. He lived an abstemious life, and was diligent and regular in the performance of his religious duties. So far as the work of government was concerned he discharged his functions with extraordinary industry. He had an alert and penetrating intellect and he kept a strict watch over all the affairs of the realm. His resolve was unshakable and obstacles acted only as a spur to his will.

But Aurangzeb's policies were wrong and he proved to be the destroyer of the great edifice which Babar, Akbar and Shah Jahan had built. His greatest mistakes were two. (1) He did not pay

[1] Bernier, F., *Travels*, *op cit* p 282

adequate attention to the sinews of the State. His neglect of public finance adversely affected both income and expenditure. He had to borrow money in order to pay his soldiers. The depletion of the treasury inflicted lasting damage upon administration. (2) He offended his upper class Hindu subjects who were the supports of the empire.

Land was the principal source of income. It was divided in two sectors. Part of the land was under the direct administration of the State and was known as *khalsa* (reserved). The revenue of *khalsa* land was collected by imperial officers and was mainly spent on the expenses of the emperor and the court. The other part was *jagir* land which provided the salaries and allowances for the mansabdars. The revenue of the *jagir* land was assigned to the officers in lieu of cash paid directly from the treasury.

In the nineteenth year of his reign, Akbar had converted all lands into *khalsa*. Apparently, his object was to undertake the direct administration of all lands in the empire and to defray the expenses of the State, including the salaries of the mansabdars, from the consolidated funds collected by the revenue department. This was an innovation which if persisted in, might have changed the whole of Indian history. Unfortunately, tradition and considerations of immediate convenience prevailed and by the end of Akbar's reign the *khalsa* had been reduced to one-fourth of the total land.

Jahangir was reckless in his extravagance and he reduced the area of *khalsa* to one-twentieth of the total. Shah Jahan made efforts to reclaim these lands and gradually built up the *khalsa* to one-seventh of all the lands. Aurangzeb inherited an evil legacy but he succeeded in further increasing the *khalsa* area to one-fifth of the total. His target was a revenue of four crore rupees from *khalsa* lands out of a total of over eighty crores from the whole of the empire. He actually collected 3.33 crores.

This was not so bad, but his other measures were wholly misconceived. He raised the assessment of land-revenue from one-third of the gross produce to one-half, and thereby considerably increased the burden on the farmer. Secondly, he levied the Jazia which was a very real hardship on the poor. These imposts left to the cultivator only the barest means of living and no surplus to invest in the improvement or extension of cultivation.

So far as *jagir* lands were concerned the revenue was so much

reduced that the *jagirs* became unattractive and the jagirdars were obliged to hand them over to revenue farmers. Resort to this vicious method of revenue collection had evil consequences for the villages and for the government. The peasants were oppressed and the government revenues were misappropriated.

In attempting to replace the Hindu revenue collectors by Muslim officers, Aurangzeb made another blunder, for Muslim zeal for the faith could not compensate for the lack of knowledge and experience in revenue affairs. The reversal of the policy did not enhance the reputation of the government for fairness, nor obliterated the alarm among Hindu officials, only a half of whom were reinstated.

If these measures affected the finances on the revenue side, the policy of expansion in the Deccan inspired by religious intolerance of the Shias of the Deccan and the Hindus of Maharashtra, drained the resources of the empire in wholly wasteful expenditure. For twenty-seven years the emperor kept a vast army continuously engaged in costly enterprises which ended in complete failure. The Maratha war had many effects. The prestige of the empire was flung in the mud. The dashing Maratha troopers laughed at the heavy, immobile, luxurious camps of the Mughals, hovered round them, cut off supplies, demoralised the grandees and levied tribute in the Mughal dominions.

The revenue of the Deccan which was reckoned at eighteen crores of rupees annually vanished, causing a serious loss to the exchequer. The treasure accumulated by the emperor's predecessors was exhausted. On his death, the balance of a paltry sum of rupees twelve crores was left.

Aurangzeb has been rightly blamed for his bigoted religious policy, which was politically unwise, and from the religious point of view unjustified. It did much damage. Religious fanaticism widened the gulf between the Hindu and the Muslim higher classes, reopened the wounds which Akbar's policy had tended to heal, and reminded the Hindus that they were citizens of an inferior status. It also interrupted the popular movement started by Kabir and Nanak to bring about a rapprochement between the two religions. But it is an exaggeration to say that it provoked a general movement against the Mughal empire or that it provided inspiration for uprisings against Muslim rule. All that it did was to furnish a valuable

point for propaganda in favour of the political aims of the insurgents, and added fuel to the smouldering fire of discontent.

A general Hindu rising was out of the question because the Hindus did not constitute a single community and were not organised as a corporate body. Also the policy of Aurangzeb practically died with him although it left behind a trail of bitter memories and resentments.

An analysis of the risings of the times makes this clear. The Satnamis, a religious sect of heterodox Hindus, came into conflict with the officers of the empire on some petty personal issues at Narnaul in 1672. They defied the local police and the army, took possession of the town and established their own government. But their success was short-lived. Auranzgeb despatched a strong force against them under the command of Radandaz Khan with a Rajput contingent under Bishnu Singh Kachhwaha. The Satnamis were wiped out. The Mughal historians, Hindu and Muslim—Ishwar Das Nagar, Mustaid Khan and Khafi Khan—did not treat them as if they were champions of Hinduism. According to the Hindu historian, "the Satnamis are extremely filthy and wicked. In their rules they make no distinction between Hindus and Musalmans, and eat pigs and other unclean animals. If a dog is served up before them, they do not show any disgust about it In sin and immorality they see no blame".[1]

The rebellion of the Jat zamindars in the upper Doab has no claim to be regarded as a religious upsurge. The relations between the central government and the hereditary landlords (zamindars) were a species of perpetual tug of war. The chronicles of the Middle Ages are full of stories of recalcitrant and unwilling chieftains refusing to pay the government dues except under duress. Incipient resistance, open rebellion—if opportunities appeared favourable—the march of imperial forces and suppression was almost a normal process. Every chief, however petty, was a sovereign equal in status though inferior in force, ever ready to extend his estate, and if luck permitted, set up as a king.

VI THE JATS

The absence of Aurangzeb in the Deccan was an opportunity which the ambitious and adventurous Jat zamindars thought they could exploit. Their earlier attempts had failed. Then Raja Ram,

[1] Quoted by Sarkar, Jadunath, *History of Aurangzib*, Vol. III, pp. 296-97

taking advantage of the quarrel between two Rajput clans, obtained the support of one of them to advance his aims. But he was killed in a faction fight, and the Mughal army, in which Bishnu Singh Kachhwaha, the Raja of Amber, played an important part, quelled the rising.

Churaman, the younger brother of Raja Ram, took part in the war of succession after the death of Aurangzeb on the winning side and became a mansabdar. In the second war of succession between the sons of Bahadur Shah and in the confusion which followed, Churaman improved his position and began to levy tolls and collect taxes with such harshness as to cause an outcry. Party factions at the imperial court prevented any firm action against him. But quarrels among his own sons so embittered his life that he committed suicide by taking poison.

Churaman's successor was his nephew, Badan Singh, who terminated the predatory activities of his predecessors and laid the foundations of a settled principality, with the usual paraphernalia of the Mughal court. "He kept his court with adequate grandeur. Several Muhammedan officers whom he had taken in service brought the requisite polish and dignity into his court and served there as models of court life and teachers of etiquette to his rough tribesmen."[1] He educated his son as "a high bred Muslim grandee". His grandson "Bahadur Singh studied up to *Sharah-e-Jami* in Arabic".[2]

The subsequent history of the Jat Raj is indistinguishable from the sordid story of the tangled intrigues of the princes and noblemen of the Mughal empire in the eighteenth century. Neither scruple nor foresight distinguished their policy towards their Hindu and Muslim contemporaries, and there is no shadow of evidence to show that besides their immediate family interest they followed any set purpose to advance the cause of the Hindu community. In the war between Kachhwahas and Rathors they sided with the former, forgetting the campaigns against the Jats led by Bishnu Singh and Sawai Jai Singh, the Kachhwaha Rajas. They helped the imperialists against the Rohillas, the Nawab of Oudh against the emperor of Delhi, the emperor against the Marathas, the Marathas against Abdali, playing a waiting game while the holy cities of Mathura and Brindaban were put to fire and sword. They schemed to preserve the

[1] Qanungo, K. R, *History of the Jats*, p. 63
[2] *Imadus Saadat* (Newal Kishore edition), p. 56

dignity but not the power of the empire. They offered an uneasy alliance to the Marathas on the eve of the Panipat war and then fearing treachery abandoned them to face Ahmad Shah Abdali alone.

These unscrupulous tactics do not support the thesis that the Jats were the defenders of the Hindu faith who had been roused to righteous anger by the religious policy of Aurangzeb.

VII. THE MARATHAS

Of all the contestants for succession to the empire, the Marathas were the most favoured by circumstances. Nature had endowed them with a compact territory which was not easy of approach. The low range of the Western Ghats which runs spine-like between the plateau and the sea-coast, the table-lands of western Deccan and the littoral of Konkan form the homeland of the Marathas. The vast expanse of the Arabian Sea washes the coastline. It showers embarrassing benefactions upon the land—torrential rains and intercontinental commerce. The Ghats offer retreats safe from the tramp of enemy horsemen. Their lonely mountain crags serve to perch the eerie castles which afford refuge from pursuit and vantage spots for dominating the plains around. The table-land is intersected by valleys through which rivers flow down to the east. The valleys contain rich soil; otherwise the land is fit only for millets and coarse grains—*bajra* and *jowar*.

In this region of coast, hills and uplands the Marathas led hard and frugal lives. Their surroundings bred independence in them and a spirit of adventure and sturdy self-reliance. Great differences of wealth as in the north and the south did not appear among them and the large class of peasant proprietors formed the backbone of their society. Caste distinctions existed as in other parts of India, but the jealousies of the three Brahmana groups, the strong position of the Marathas, and the popularity of the reform movement among the masses, mitigated the rigours of caste. A common language—Marathi—gave a cultural coherence to the people's aspirations, and a sentiment of unity.

Under the mild rule of the Ahmadnagar and Bijapur Sultans, the Marathas had abundant opportunities to prosper and to rise in influence. A number of Maratha families built up small chieftaincies; many entered the service of the Sultans and some obtained offices of trust and responsibility. In the seventeenth century the

rivalries of the succession Sultanates of the Deccan gave an impetus to the ambitions of the Maratha chiefs. The atmosphere was electrified by religious enthusiasm and destiny stood beckoning importunately.

At the right moment a great leader appeared among the people who possessed the highest qualities of statesman and soldier. Shivaji bound together in one political system the people who since the days of the Yadavas of Devagiri had known no organised polity of their own and who for more than three hundred and fifty years had remained subject to the rulers of dynasties hailing from the north. To create a State out of the scattered elements was a wonderful achievement. Not less marvellous was to give it an administrative machinery constructed upon sound principles.

Shivaji's genius shines through the accomplishment of a threefold task—the creation of a military force capable of overthrowing the yoke of the Deccan Sultans, the unification of the Marathas under the umbrella of one State, and the organisation of an enlightened and stable system of government. Finance had been the weak point of Indian governments, but Shivaji in the fixing of the emoluments of his officers, in the method of making payment and in all his undertakings was extremely careful to avoid extravagance. Even his military expeditions were sustained by conquests. He set his face rigidly against the jagir system. His services were open to talent. Brahmanas, Prabhus (Kayasthas) and Marathas all had an equal chance and even Muslims were admitted to high rank.

About the ultimate aims of his policy it is difficult to speak with certainty. It is held by some Maratha historians that Shivaji wanted to establish the *Hindu Pad Padshahi*, the Hindu Raj in place of the Mughal empire. But throughout Maratha history Swaraj has been sharply distinguished from *mulkgiri*—the land of regular and settled Maratha rule from the lands lying outside Swaraj—"the happy hunting ground for his horsemen", and a legitimate source of Maratha levies. In this connection, Jadunath Sarkar observes, "the coincidence between Shivaji's foreign policy and that of a Quranic sovereign is so complete that both the history of Shivaji by his courtier Krishnaji Anant and the Persian official history of Bijapur use exactly the same word, *mulkgiri*, to describe such raids into neighbouring countries as a regular political ideal...Shivaji (as well as the Peshwas after him) carried on *mulkgiri* into all

neighbouring states, Hindu no less than Muslim and squeezed rich Hindus as mercilessly as he did Muhammedans."[1]

Shivaji had risen on the crest of a religious wave, but there was no chauvinism in this movement. Tukaram and other Maratha saints were not narrow-minded bigots and their religion of *bhakti* was not exclusive. In fact, they wanted to bring the followers of Hinduism and Islam together. In Hinduism they disapproved of idol worship, superstition, caste, pilgrimages, etc., and they denounced the spirit of Muslim intolerance. Shivaji regarded them as his teachers. He, therefore, followed a policy of live and let live. He showed respect for the Muslim saints, for the holy Book of Islam and for the mosques. There is no record of his interfering with the celebration of Islamic rites and ceremonies, or treating Muslims on a different level from the Hindus.

But Shivaji was a champion of Hindu religious freedom. He warned Aurangzeb against the imposition of Jazia and he fought Aurangzeb because he could not accept the pretensions of the political superiority of Islam or the status of inferiority which Aurangzeb wanted to impose upon the Hindus. Toleration, justice and equality were the maxims of his policy in his own kingdom, and he desired their adoption in the Mughal empire.

Shivaji died comparatively young. He was only 53 years old at the time of his death. This was a calamity, for the young state had hardly time to send its roots down into the soil. It was not able to develop any peaceful method of transfer of authority. It was regarded more as an apanage of the king than a commonwealth or *res publica*. This institutional immaturity became manifest before Shivaji had closed his eyes. His last years were embittered by controversy about the heritage of his domain. Sambhaji, the eldest son, revolted against his father and deserted to the Mughals. The cabinet was disunited, the two powerful ministers—the Peshwa and the Sachiv—"were openly at loggerheads with each other."

When ultimately Sambhaji became reconciled to his father and ascended the throne, he wreaked vengeance upon the ministers and officials suspected of hostility towards him. He put to death Soyarabai, his stepmother, Anaji Datto, the Sachiv, and a number of others. A vendetta was started against Brahmana ministers. "His cruelty, violence and debauchery made some of his leading

[1] Sarkar, Jadunath, *Shivaji and his Times* (fifth edition), pp 372-73

Brahmanas conceive the design of destroying him",[1] with the result that he was betrayed, captured by a Mughal commandant and beheaded by Aurangzeb's order nine years after his father's death.

Then followed twenty years of heroic struggle between the Marathas and the forces of Aurangzeb. The dare-devilry of Maratha captains and their brilliant tactics wore the emperor out. He retired to Aurangabad to die a sadly disappointed man. The Marathas had won the war, but at a terrible price.

The effect of the struggle was to give an impetus to centrifugal forces. The unity which Shivaji had imposed upon the Maratha chiefs and people through the establishment of a unitary state was lost. The Maratha Sardars who had to carry on a guerilla war against the Mughals became so used to relying upon their own judgement and will that on the termination of the struggle they could not get out of their habit of independent action. As time passed, their loyalty to the central authority became weaker, and finally they set themselves up as autonomous rulers of their territories. They considered themselves as the peers of the Peshwa, and they were reluctant to show deference to his orders. They were even prepared to defy him in case they disapproved of his decisions.

A worse consequence was the evaporation of that moral fervour which Shivaji had inspired in them—the championship of 'Maharashtra Dharma'. The enthusiasm which had led them to defy the might of the Mughal empire for more than twenty years was replaced by greed for land and money. After spending nearly half a century in the pursuit of a vision of righteousness and freedom, the Marathas had become poor imitators of Mughal ways and manners. The war corrupted their morals and destroyed their idealism. They began to yearn for the luxury, pomp and show of the imperial court at Delhi. Their native virtues—frugality, simplicity, and devotion to duty—were slowly undermined. The joy of living and dying for a great cause gave place to egotism and self-aggrandisement.

Unhealthy political tendencies which had been kept in check by Shivaji made their appearance. Disputes regarding succession to the throne of the king as well as to the gaddi of the Peshwa became the bane of Maratha politics. Sambhaji had been opposed by his half-brother Raja Ram. The restoration of Shahu was resisted by Tarabai, widow of Raja Ram. Succession to Shahu who had no son led

[1] Sarkar, Jadunath, *The House of Shivaji* (1940 edition), p. 197

to conflict between the chief officials. When the Raja became powerless and the Peshwa usurped his authority, contentions arose at the death of the Peshwa.

The Peshwa's rise to power created internal jealousies. The Rajas on the one side and the Maratha Sardars on the other disliked the eclipse of their importance, and tripartite intrigues continued to bedevil the affairs of the state. When Raghuji Bhonsle raided Bengal, the Nawab, Allahwardi Khan, obtained the support of the Peshwa against Bhonsle and routed him (1743). Damaji Gaekwad and Dabhade ravaged the Peshwa's territory in support of Tarabai (1750-51). Madhav Rao, the fourth Peshwa, and his uncle Raghunath Rao fought a civil war in which Holkar and Bhonsle as well as Nizam Ali, the ruler of the Deccan, were allies of the uncle (1761). The fifth Peshwa was done to death by violence instigated by Raghunath Rao (1773). When Mahadji Sindhia visited Poona after twelve years' campaigns in the north, there was a terrific alarm at Poona and the Poona politicians headed by Nana Phadnavis, who hated Sindhia, were so frightened that they requested Cornwallis for a loan of the Bombay regiments returning from Mysore (1792). For a whole year the two parties kept manoeuvring against each other, Nana intriguing with Holkar and others to bring about Sindhia's fall. At last an open rupture took place between Sindhia and Holkar, and Holkar was decisively defeated at Lakheri (1793). Mahadji's successor, Daulat Rao, went to the length of taking Nana prisoner by treachery at the instance of Baji Rao and proceeded to plunder Poona—the seat of the central government—(1798). The quarrels of Nana, Holkar and Sindhia shook the foundations of the state. The blind folly of Raghunath Rao and Baji Rao II introduced the Trojan horse in the shape of the British East India Company into the citadel of Maratha affairs. Wars ensued. The Maratha Sardars and ministers were engaged in suicidal internecine conflicts. Naturally the British profited by them and by 1802 forced the Peshwa to sign away Maratha independence. The other Sardars were soon rounded up and liquidated and by 1818 the dream of Maratha sovereignty had melted into thin air.

The administrative changes forced by the struggle against Aurangzeb had sapped the strength of the solid structure built up by Shivaji, the founder of the state. For example, the jagirdari system was re-established. Regular revenue collection was not possible and the

only way to remunerate the officials was by the assignment of land-revenue (*saranjams*). During the war against Aurangzeb, the army was swollen beyond all proportion. To meet its expenses a policy of harsh exactions from neighbouring territories was adopted. Every year for eight months expeditions were led north and south, east and west for the collection of loot. But much the greater part of it was appropriated by the intransigent commanders themselves, and little of plunder or of revenue reached the treasury at Poona. The Peshwas were always in debt and always importunate for money.

Baji Rao I (1720-40) was a warlike Peshwa and a great soldier. He led expeditions into Karnatak against the Nizam and in the north. But although they brought him fame and extension of territory, he was involved in debt. "His troops were in arrears, the *Soucars* (or bankers), to whom he already owed a personal debt of many lacks of rupees, refused to make any further advances, and he complained bitterly of the constant mutinies and clamours in his camp, which occasioned him much vexation and distress."[1] The Peshwa wrote, "I have fallen into that hell of being beset by creditors, and to pacify *Soucars* and *Sillidars*. I am falling at their feet, till I have rubbed the skin from my forehead."[2]

Balaji Rao, the successor of Baji Rao I, contracted between 1740 and 1760 a total debt of one crore and fifty lakhs of rupees, on which he had to pay from twelve to eighteen per cent interest. Although in 1751-52 he realised a revenue of thirty-six and a half million rupees—the highest collection made—the state was much in debt at the accession of his successor Madhav Rao. Balaji in a letter to his friend Nana Purandare reveals the state of his finances. He complains that although a river of gold was flowing into Maharashtra from the north, and another from the south, "it goes on increasing our thirst all the more." For "when it (the river of gold) courses through the arid regions of Poona, I fear it will disappear before reaching home."[3] The battle of Panipat caused heavy losses to the exchequer. Madhav Rao tried to husband the resources with great care, "yet the treasury was exhausted." Nana Phadnavis was extremely close-fisted and although he built up a large fortune for himself, he starved the army, so much so, that "when his body was being removed for funeral rites,

[1] Duff, Grant, *History of the Mahrattas* (1921 edition), Vol I, p. 390
[2] *Ibid*, footnote
[3] Sardesai, G S, *New History of the Marathas*, Vol II, p. 242

the Arab guards on duty created a row demanding their arrears of pay."

After Madhav Rao (1761-72), the government of the Peshwa was overshadowed by the power of the Sindhias. But the Sindhias showed the same improvidence in administering their finances as the Peshwas. They raised large armies, interfered in the affairs of the Mughal empire and entered into the intrigues of the nobility, hiring themselves out to any one who promised to satisfy their demands. The promises were light-heartedly made, but their realisation always required military expeditions. All the tributes and subsidies thus collected were consumed and the administration lived from hand to mouth.

This is borne out by Mahadji Sindhia's agent writing to Nana Phadnavis in 1785 that "all the receipts (from the provinces under his control) were being spent on the infantry and artillery and that the Maratha part of the army, the cavalry, was starving and abandoning the army in large numbers. Huge loans from bankers had been incurred. Practically all *Sahukars*—Maratha, Gujarati, and Rangads—had been tapped."[1] Again after the battle of Lalsot (1787), Sindhia pressed Nana for aid. Said he, "I am helpless for want of treasure. Nana should spare at least ten lakhs for me. As my resources are exhausted, I cannot stay in Hindustan any longer."[2]

In 1793 Cornwallis reported: "His (Mahadji Sindhia's) revenues have so rapidly declined in his absence (from the north), that they are become greatly inadequate to the maintenance of his army; and to make certain provision for the payment of the corps under M. De Boigne, he has been obliged to transfer that officer in Jaidad, a district estimated at twenty-seven lacs of rupees yearly collection, a measure of such dangerous tendency to his authority and security, that nothing but the total want of other resources could have compelled him to adopt it."[3]

Mahadji Sindhia was so much impressed by the superiority of European-trained troops in battle that he resolved to raise an army on the European model. He employed a number of French officers to recruit troops and give them training. But these troops were expensive and Mahadji was only able to pay their salaries regularly

[1] *Historical Papers relating to Mahadji Sindhia* (1937), pp. 887-9
[2] *Ibid*, pp. 704-05
[3] *Poona Residency Correspondence*, Vol I (edited by Jadunath Sarkar), p. 390

by keeping his other troops starving. The loyalty of the foreign condottieri was never certain and ultimately they proved traitors. The Indian officers could not take their place for lack of training and the expenses could not be met because the finances were in disorder.

The foreign policy of the Marathas was erroneous. It laid upon the government burdens which it could not carry. The *mulkgiri* of Shivaji's period had some semblance of propriety, because it could be interpreted as a reaction against oppression and bigotry. It had a justification as long as the struggle for existence lasted against Aurangzeb. But under the Peshwas, it assumed the form of naked aggression. In their incursions they made no distinction between friend and foe. They exacted tribute from all and sundry, sparing neither their co-religionists nor the Hindustani party among the Mughal nobility which sought a close alliance with the Rajputs and Jats. Thus by their levies and spoliations they antagonised the Rajputs, the Jats and the Bundelas, and their atrocities created terror in Bengal and the Gangetic valley. The Maratha system outside its own domain was purely predatory.

Even the territories which they conquered were not treated with statesmanlike wisdom. The cultivators were oppressed, and harsh measures were adopted to extract money from them. "Other Hindu states took a pride in improving the condition of the territory they conquered. They constructed temples, wells, canals, roads and other public works. The Marathas did nothing of the kind. Their *mulkgiri* raids, by destroying the industries and wealth of the country overrun, merely killed the goose which laid the golden egg."[1] Rajwade confesses, "the Peshwa failed to win the minds of men in the conquered territories. No institutions were set up to explain to the conquered people Maratha ideals and rally their support to the Maratha cause. To the Kanarese, the Andhras, the Gujaratis, the Sikhs, Bundelas, the Purbias and the Rangads in the new conquests their Maratha rulers remained strangers and could never count on their support when threatened by an outside enemy. In the campaign of Panipat, the Marathas realised the truth of the old adage that one could do anything with the bayonets except sit on them."[2]

The failure of Maratha leadership was a disaster of the first

[1] *Cambridge History of India*, Vol IV (Indian edition), pp. 414-15
[2] *Rajwade's Writings* (Sahitya Akademi edition of 1958), pp 189-90

magnitude. It opened the gate for the foreigner, and surrendered the fort for prolonged alien occupation.

VII THE SIKHS

The formation of the Sikh community is a social phenomenon which shows some distinctive features. The founder of Sikhism, Guru Nanak, lived in times when the *bhakti* movement was in full tide. Ramananda, Kabir, Namdeva, Trilochan, Chaitanya and others were actively propagating the religion of love of man and devotion to God. They laid stress upon the worship of one God, reverence for the Guru, and congregational worship. They disapproved of idolatry and caste, and tried to reconcile differences between Hinduism and Islam. They taught the equality of all men and promoted goodwill and understanding.

Guru Nanak shared their ideas and preached them to all classes. His simple and direct teachings, his pure and dedicated life, his sincerity and earnestness attracted to him numerous disciples. Among them were both Hindus and Musalmans, some men of high status, but the large majority of humble origins. He called upon them to live and work in the world, but in the spirit of dedication to God.

Guru Nanak's mantle fell upon Guru Angad and his successors. Among them there were a number of remarkable men who propagated the message of Nanak and gave a definite shape to the congregation of his religious followers. As a result the Sikhs were organised as a distinct religious society. So that, while the followers of the other saints remained within the frame of the Hindu community, the Sikhs assumed an individuality of their own.

It is true that they retained many features of the Hindu religion, philosophy and law, yet by rejecting the pantheon of the Hindu gods and goddesses, the Hindu sacred scriptures, the Hindu system of castes and the primacy of Brahmanas in society, they asserted the independence of their group life. The three Gurus who were mainly instrumental in this development were Guru Arjun, Guru Har Govind and Guru Gobind Singh. Each of them made an important contribution towards the transformation of their religious devotees. The process was completed by the last Guru who converted the Sikhs (disciples) into the Dal Khalsa (the Band of the Select).

The change from a mystic pietistic sect to a militant community of warriors was slow but inevitable. Babar and his first two successors

were latitudinarians. Akbar's inquisitive and restless mind revelled in the search for new ideas and new experiences in religion and for him the stir and commotion in people's beliefs was a sign of health. Naturally he did not interfere with the propagation of the Sikh faith. But a change was coming over the Sikhs and Akbar's successors were not so broadminded. Jahangir put Guru Arjun in prison on suspicion that he supported Prince Khusrau. His son Guru Har Govind also incurred the displeasure of Jahangir and came into conflict with the authorities in the Panjab. Under his leadership, the Sikhs increased in numbers and became "a kind of separate state within the empire", possessing a fisc and an army.

Guru Gobind Singh's ministry coincided with the reign of Aurangzeb. The persecution of the Sikhs and the martyrdom of Guru Tegh Bahadur rankled in his mind. His following had already set its feet on a new path in which religion and politics were combined. Aurangzeb's policies and measures determined them to move with a grim determination along this dangerous road. In the life and death struggle which ensued, the transformation of the Sikhs was inevitable. Guru Gobind Singh prepared the Sikhs for the struggle by infusing in them a new enthusiasm for the religious principles taught by Guru Nanak and by sharply defining the characteristic marks and features of the organisation of the faithful. Thus the body of the mystic Church was changed into the militant Church of the Khalsa. Guru Gobind Singh was also responsible for the introduction of some new and interesting ideas into the fraternity. He abolished the institution of the preceptor (Guru) and declared that henceforth the Granth was the Guru, and wherever five Sikhs assembled, the spirit of the Guru would be present. The 'five' were to be elected by the whole assembly of the Sikhs. Thus the entire body of the brotherhood (Panth) was constituted as their guide and preceptor.

Unfortunately these ideas could not bear fruit. The deaths of Guru Gobind Singh and Aurangzeb inaugurated an era of civil war, invasion and anarchy, and the Panjab fell into the vortex of violent upheaval. The Sikhs were drawn into it. The imperial authority declined rapidly and the invasions of Nadir Shah and Ahmad Shah Abdali plunged the prosperous province into chaos and ruin. The Sikhs were the only organised group which retained a semblance of coherence in this devastated region. When, therefore, the tide of invasion receded they filled the political vacuum.

But during the struggles of the period, the cohesion of the Khalsa too did not remain intact, particularly because no outstanding leader arose to keep them united. The Sikhs were divided into twelve groups (*misls*) and each one of them fought for its own preservation. The habit of pursuing narrow sectional interests brought them into mutual conflicts. The spirit which Nanak and Gobind Singh had evoked—the spirit of religious devotion and spiritual exaltation, the spirit of sacrifice and service for the Sikh brotherhood—had been overlaid with the desire for power and self-aggrandisement. The Church had succumbed under the weight of sordid politics.

Then another great leader appeared among the community, but the Sikh ethos had changed, and the desire for political power had overlaid religious piety. Maharaja Ranjit Singh was endowed with the highest qualities of a leader. He was an intrepid and skilful general, a great organiser, an efficient administrator and a clever diplomat. In the pursuit of his aims he was ruthless, but not cruel. He was generous, charitable and hospitable. He suffered from the weaknesses of his times and of his class. He was not deeply religious, but he was respectful, even humble, towards religious heads.

Ranjit Singh was the chief of a minor confederacy, yet by his prowess he brought all the Sikh *misls* on the right side of the Satluj under his rule, and then by war and diplomacy subjugated a vast territory, including Peshawar beyond the Indus, Multan, Kashmir, Kangra, and the neighbouring hill states, and the tribal areas on the frontier.

As an organiser, Ranjit Singh's main achievement was the transformation of the army. He began his career as the commander of an irregular cavalry. But he gradually built up an army whose strength lay in an infantry on the European model, a well-equipped artillery and a regular cavalry. This was a most powerful instrument of war, superior to that of any Asiatic foe.

In building up his military organisation, he overlooked the fact that the army is merely an instrument of the state and that when it becomes the master the state is put in jeopardy. He did not pay equal attention to his civil administration. His financial arrangements were crude and civil and criminal justice was entrusted to Sardars.

It is to the credit of Ranjit Singh that he raised a fabric of organised government out of the chaos which prevailed in the Panjab. Unfortunately, he built on weak foundations. His state could not be

considered a religious Sikh state. It was not a willing partnership of the Sikh community, for the trans-Satluj Sikh groups (*misls*) were united by force, and the cis-Satluj groups refused to submit to him and in fact accepted the overlordship of the British. The result was that the loyalty of even the Sikhs who had submitted was never whole-hearted.

Ranjit Singh endeavoured to rally all religious elements into his service. Hindu, Muslim and Sikh officers held the most responsible posts under him, and he gave his confidence to all irrespective of religion. But although they rendered loyal and zealous service to him personally, they were not bound together by any ties of attachment to the state. In the army which was the mainstay of his power there were Hindus, Muslims and Sikhs both in the ranks and among the officers. His European commanders as well as his Hindu, Muslim and Sikh generals and captains gave a good account of themselves in his wars. But they fought for the person of Maharaja Ranjit Singh and not for religion or race or country.

Ranjit Singh's dynasty may have continued to rule over the Panjab for many years, but unfortunately there was none among his sons and grandsons who had inherited his qualities. Again political conditions had been transformed by the establishment of British dominion in India. Already in Ranjit Singh's time they were throwing a military cordon round the Panjab. They had forbidden his expansion across the Satluj, they had occupied Sind and they were extending their influence towards Afghanistan. Their rivalry with Russia which was marching with rapid strides towards the north-western approaches of India was bound to create difficulties for an independent state in the Panjab, as it did later for Afghanistan. It was doubtful whether the successors of Ranjit Singh could have enjoyed freedom for long. A clash was inevitable and in the war between an autocratic ruler with heterogeneous subjects and a powerful modern government supported by a patriotic people united by the sentiments of nationalism the issue was never in doubt.

This was amply demonstrated by the Anglo-Sikh wars which ensued on the death of the Lion of the Panjab. In the twinkling of an eye the grand edifice of his state crumbled and was laid in the dust. A few battles were fought—some of them were indecisive—but the organisation as such showed no power of sustained resistance. It was not lack of valour, for the soldiers fought like heroes; it was because

the officers were venal and corrupt and moved by petty jealousies, mean selfishnesses and traitorous intentions that the magnificent army was broken and destroyed.

The episode of the Sikh monarchy teaches a number of wholesome lessons. In the first place, it shows that India has never suffered from a lack of capable leaders—men of great force of character and ability; secondly, that no community or class has the monopoly of capacity and excellence. The galaxy of stars which adorned the court of Ranjit Singh would shed lustre on any government in any part of the world. Among them were men who had risen from low ranks of society and also those who were of high status—Brahmanas, Rajputs and Jats, Khattris, Gujars and Musalmans; sons of shopkeepers, *khidmatgars*, traders, menial servants, as well as children of rich and princely families.

The fall of the Sikhs, as that of the Marathas and the Mughals, was due not to the absence of men of talent and energy, but to the lack of the spirit which subordinates the talent and the energy of the individual to the service and well-being of society as a whole and thus universalises and eternalises the ephemeral and the isolated in man. It was in this respect that the elite failed.

By the middle of the eighteenth century India was fast moving towards catastrophe. The Mughal empire which had for two hundred years kept the princes and people of India bound together in a unitary political system had fallen prey to the twin forces of internal disruption and invasions from the north-west. With the decline of central authority not only did political cohesion disappear and particularism raise its ugly head, but a general decay of manners and morals supervened. Loyalties to society and State weakened. Egoism and greed for wealth and power sapped the foundations of corporate life. Desire for immediate personal gain blinded men. Wisdom and far-sightedness so deserted them that they could not gauge even the near consequences of their policies nor distinguish between their true foes and friends. Destiny seemed to urge them towards self-destruction.

In the collapse of the Mughal government, all classes suffered. The peasants were crushed by the oppression of the officials and farmers of revenue. The artisans suffered because their patrons fell into economic difficulties. Both artisans and merchants lost because trade with foreign countries was disrupted along land routes by the

chaotic conditions of the Panjab through which merchant caravans passed, and because the sea lanes leading to India came under the domination of European powers whose fleets contended for supremacy and joined piracy and brigandage with the legitimate business of transporting goods. Foreign trade passed out of the hands of the merchants and internal trade was impeded by civil wars and the impoverishment of the nobility.

CHAPTER FOUR

ECONOMIC CONDITIONS IN THE EIGHTEENTH CENTURY

European economy at the end of the Middle Ages was marked by the expansion of commerce. Industry developed in towns and gave impetus to trade. A new class which played an increasingly important role in the economic and political fields came into existence. This was the middle class. It belonged neither to the feudal nobility nor to the serfs. The emergence of this class changed the face of feudal Europe and set in motion forces which culminated in the growth of national states. Thus it was that, through the agency of the bourgeoisie bred in the towns, the social revolution of Europe was accomplished.

Towns: their trade and industry

In India, on the other hand, conditions were different. Although the Indian village economy, with its self-sufficiency and subsistence farming, had some features in common with the medieval European agricultural system, the towns and cities of India and the organisation of their crafts and commerce had not even a remote resemblance with the European urban system. There was no lack of towns in India. But there were among them only a few which owed their existence exclusively to industry or trade. Trade and industry developed in them as their population increased. But unlike European towns, economic affairs did not dominate their civic life. The Indian merchant class differed completely in its nature, functions and aims from the middle class of Europe. It exercised no influence on either industrial development or political affairs such as the bourgeoisie did in the West in the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries. There was consequently no industrial revolution in India, nor the evolution of a sovereign national state. Nor did the merchant class give birth to an enterprising and resurgent industrial class.

In the territories ruled by Akbar, it is estimated that there were 120 cities and 3,200 towns. Agra had an estimated population of 5 to 6·6 lakhs, which was larger than that of London during the same period. Delhi compared favourably with Paris. Ahmadabad was almost equal to London. Lahore was second to no European city

and the population of Patna was about two lakhs. But in spite of their large populations, these cities could not vie with their European counterparts because they lacked free institutions established by the mercantile communities in the European towns and cities. In the eighteenth century wars, invasions and other calamities wrought havoc, and cities like Lahore, Delhi, Agra and Mathura in the north, and large tracts of country in the Deccan were devastated. This adversity was, however, compensated to some extent by the appearance of European merchants on the coasts of India. They purchased Indian goods in return for gold and silver, and gave a stimulus to industry.

The Indian arts and crafts which catered to the needs of the upper classes were not exclusively an urban phenomenon. Aristocratic industry was highly specialised in both towns and villages. Particular groups of artisans undertook distinct processes of production, and the specialists worked in coordination to produce finished articles. For instance, in the manufacture of cotton cloth there were separate groups of carders, spinners, weavers, dyers, bleachers, printers, etc. Localisation of certain industries in particular villages and towns was another type of industrial specialisation. Workers in different metals occupied different quarters of the city; wood-workers, jewellers, gold-smiths and oilmen, etc., congregated in their respective streets. Some villages manufactured calicoes, others muslins, still others turbans, and so on. Embroidered cloth (*kim-khwab*), silken cloth, cloth with gold and silver thread, were specialities of different places.

Specialisation naturally promoted skill, so that Indian workmanship reached a perfection unrivalled in those times in the world. In industrial organisation and techniques, too, India was far more advanced than the West. The products of Indian industry not only fulfilled the needs of Asian and African countries, but were also in great demand in the markets of Europe. They reached the Western countries by sea and land routes.

The Indian merchants, who were the purveyors of Eastern commodities, were well known and well established all along the ports of the Persian Gulf and the Red Sea. They were also met with in considerable numbers in Qandahar, Kabul, Balkh, Bukhara, Kashghar, etc., in Afghanistan and Central Asia, in Shiraz, Isfahan, Ray and Meshed in Iran, and Baku, Astrakhan, Nijni Novgorod, etc., in Russia. According to Peter the Great of Russia, "the

commerce of India is the commerce of the world, and ... he who can exclusively control it is the dictator of Europe".[1]

Indian goods also found their way into the East-Asian countries—Burma, Malaya, Indonesia, China and Japan. The Coromandel coast and Bengal were their supply centres.

Industrial organisation

Indian industry was required to satisfy two different types of demand. One arose out of the needs of the common people, an overwhelming majority of whom lived in the villages, and the other from the upper strata of society.

The organisation of industries which supplied manufactured goods for the needs of the rural population was primitive. The artisans worked for a part of the year in agriculture, because the demand for their products was, on the whole, not adequate enough to keep them engaged in their industrial occupation all the time. The exchange of goods in the villages was regulated by custom, and the wages of the artisans, which were paid in kind by allotting a share in the produce of the farm to each artisan attached to it, were fixed by ancient custom and not by the market forces of demand and supply.

The demand of the upper classes—the feudal gentry and the rich merchants—consisted of luxury articles. Its volume was considerable. The rich, though comparatively small in number, created a great volume of demand for luxury goods as they loved the good things of life and desired, both for use and display, expensive articles of fine make. Such articles had also a demand outside the country, and were exported in considerable quantities.

The producers of high quality luxury goods worked in their homes or in the state *karkhanas* (workshops) in the towns. Some village artisans who had acquired special skill in their respective crafts, while continuing to live in their respective villages, also contributed to the supply of these articles.

The organisation of craftsmen was not comparable in strength to that of the gilds of Europe. The only area for which evidence of the existence of well-organised craft-gilds is available, is Gujarat. Normally the elder craftsmen trained the younger men seeking admission to the trade. The craft was a hereditary occupation and

[1] Hamilton, *Problems of the Middle-East* (London, 1909), p 62

the craftsman was a member of a particular caste. Gilds, therefore, did not transcend the authority of the caste. In fact, all matters relating to the trade were placed before the Panchayat and the Chaudhari of the caste. Thus the administrative functions of the European gild were performed in India by the caste.

Another aspect of the medieval European industrial organisation, viz. the putting out system, had developed in India too. As most craftsmen were poor, they had to work for merchants who advanced them money (*dadani*) through brokers (*dallal*), or dealt with them through *gomashtas* (agents). Money was paid to craftsmen for implements and raw materials, and advance wages were given in return for finished goods. Till the stipulated quantity was produced and marked with the merchant's seal, the craftsman was bound to work for him. The finished articles were usually collected and placed on the market by the middleman. Sometimes the nobles held direct dealings with the artisans. This gave opportunities to them to oppress the poor artisans.

Among the *karkhanas* (workshops) those at the capitals of the kingdoms were best organised. Bernier[1] mentions large halls occupied by different craftsmen. They were under the direction of masters (*maliks*) and superintendents (daroghas) who controlled them. The *karkhanas* functioned under the direct patronage of the rulers—kings and governors—who took keen interest in their work. They encouraged promising craftsmen by special rewards and also helped to improve the quality of the goods produced.

However, production, on the whole, was organised in small units—the households of the artisans. Their earnings were meagre and the activity was sustained on the advances from merchants or the goodwill of patrons. The capital invested in industry was small and it failed to assume that corporate form which it developed in Europe. Then each occupation was based upon the caste which was a closed association, and this made mobility of labour from one trade or craft to another, and inter-group cooperation between different occupations, difficult if not altogether impossible.

The Indian village was a self-sufficient economic unit. The wants of the rural population were few and they were almost all met from within the village. The agricultural surplus went to the king in the

[1] Bernier, F., *Travels in the Mogul Empire* (Constable edition, revised by V. A. Smith), Oxford, 1934, pp 258-59

form of land-revenue and the peasant, after meeting the government demand, had little surplus left with him for purchasing the goods of the urban industry. In these circumstances, the stream of exchange of goods between the village and the town ran thin. Lack of capital, rigidity of caste restrictions, and the meagreness of trade between the village and the town, were the factors which prevented the development of the traditional business classes engaged in trade and banking into a strong and well-knit middle class of the European type.

The simple and self-sufficient village economy and the ascetical outlook of the people acted and reacted upon one another. Their religious attitude encouraged disdain of worldly goods. Indulgence in the satisfaction of the senses was regarded evil and the suppression of desires virtuous. Property was a snare. In any case, it was transient and fickle and unworthy of a wise man's attention. Kings and nobles might please themselves with the display of wealth and power, and might be justified in doing so, but they too would be better men if they followed Ashoka and Aurangzeb For the rest of mankind, renunciation and resignation were the true ideals of life. Thus the moral climate was not propitious for the accumulation of capital, nor did the system of joint families and the laws of inheritance of the Hindus and Muslims suit the perpetuation of riches in families for any length of time. The custom of the escheat of noblemen's property at death to the king was a deterrent to the emergence of a hereditary wealthy class among nobles. The science of economics was not cultivated by Indian scholars.

The tradesmen, bankers and money-lenders who constituted the Indian mercantile community, and might be regarded as a sort of a middle class of those times, made fortunes, but did not invest their capital in the establishment and development of manufacturing industry. They utilised it in giving loans to the members of the ruling class on high rates of interest and to craftsmen in the form of advance payments for goods to be prepared and supplied. But they lacked that spirit of enterprise which constituted the mainspring of European industry. Moreover, the individuals and their families conducted their business in isolation unlike the corporate associations and gilds which the merchants formed in Europe.

Although Indian industry remained in the pre-capitalist stage and India did not evolve the industrial middle class, yet, both in

variety of output and techniques of production she was, at the time, more advanced industrially than contemporary Europe. Moreland, the historian of India's medieval economy who was not inclined to exaggerate India's achievements, however, admitted: "it is still to my mind indisputable that in the matter of industry India was more advanced relatively to western Europe than she is today".[1]

The testimony of Pyrard on the greatness and originality of Indian industry and culture is of permanent interest. "In short", says he, "I could never make an end of telling such a variety of manufactures as well in gold, silver, iron, steel, copper and other metals, as in precious stones, choice woods, and other valued and rare materials. For they are all cunning folk and owe nothing to the people of the West, themselves endued with a keener intelligence than is usual with us and hands as subtle as ours; to see or hear a thing but once is, with them, to know it. A cunning and crafty race: not, however, fraudulent, nor easy to defraud. And what is to be observed of all their manufactures is this, that they are both of good workmanship and cheap; I have never seen men of wit so fine and polished as are these Indians: they have nothing barbarous and savage about them, as we are apt to suppose. They are unwilling indeed to adopt manners and customs of the Portuguese; yet do they readily learn their manufactures and workmanship, being all very curious and desirous of learning. In fact, the Portuguese take more from them than they from the Portuguese; and they that come fresh to Goa are very simpletons till they have acquired the airs and graces of the Indies. It must then be understood that all these countries of Cambaye, Surat and others (in the region) of the river Indus and of the Grand Mogor, are the best and the most fertile of all the Indies and are, as it were, a nursing mother, providing traffic and commerce, for all the rest: so, too, is the kingdom of Bengal, where their manners and customs are the same. The people, both men and women, are there more cultivated than elsewhere; those countries are the marts of all the ships of India, and their living is better than anywhere else".[2]

About the skill of Indian artisans he adds: "No people in the world know so much about pearls and precious stones; and even at

[1] Moreland, W H., *India at the Death of Akbar*, pp. 155-56
[2] *The Voyage of F. Pyrard of Laval to the East Indies*, Volume II, Part I (Hakluyt Society), pp. 248-49

Goa the goldsmiths, lapidaries and other workmen occupied with the finer crafts, are all Banians (Banias) and Bramenis (Brahmanas) of Cambaye, and have their own streets and shops".[1]

Production

Production covered a wide range of goods from primary agricultural products to fine cotton and silk fabrics, metal-work in iron and steel, brass and copper, gold and silver, and ships of various sizes. Foodgrains were the most important agricultural commodity which was raised by almost every village to supply its own need. Other agricultural products included cotton, sugarcane, tobacco, poppy and indigo. Fish formed an important part of the food of the people of Bengal and Orissa, and also of Sind, and various travellers mention that it was dried and salted for provisioning ships. Fish-oil was prepared in Sind, and the use of fish manure was established in western India. The country had a prosperous trade in pearls and pearl fishery was well established in the south. The mining industry was not well developed and mineral production was small. But the production of iron on a small scale was widespread and every part of the country produced iron for its own use. Indian swords were highly valued all over western Asia. Besides metals, Indian mineral products included diamonds, salt and saltpetre.

Among manufacturing industries, cotton textile was the most important. The industry was spread widely over the country but the more important centres of production were Dacca, Banaras, Agra, Multan, Burhanpur, Lahore, Ahmadabad, Patan, Baroda, Broach and Surat. Other textile industries included silk manufactures, woollen scarlet cloth, and hemp and sack (jute) cloth in Bengal.

The production of sugar, vegetable-oil, dye-stuffs, opium and metalware was well established. Among the cottage crafts, mention may be made of the work of jewellers and silver-smiths.

Water transport was the principal means of both inland and foreign trade so that there was an extensive demand for boats and ships in the country. Merchant ships in the port towns and boats plying on the country's rivers were all manufactured in the country. There was a flourishing boat-building industry at Dacca, Allahabad, Lahore, Thatta, Masulipatam, Pulicat, Calicut, Surat, Bassein

[1] *Ibid*, p. 250

and Goa. Some idea of the magnitude of the boat-building operations in the country may be had from the fact that there were 40,000 boats plying on the Indus, a flotilla of 40,000 to 50,000 boats in Bengal, a fleet of 180 boats between Agra and Satgaon, and a fleet of 100 gallivats in Malabar, besides numerous vessels in the ports of India. There was also a fleet of 300 to 400 sea-going ships plying between Cambay and Goa, and another of 250 sailing from Goa to the south, besides numerous ships plying on the eastern coast of Bengal and Orissa. Balkrishna estimates that the total shipping entering or leaving Indian ports annually amounted, in the early eighteenth century, to 3,45,000 tons of which 85,000 tons were employed in foreign trade while the rest were engaged in coastal traffic.[1]

In the art of ship-building, India was ahead of European nations. Writing about the skill of the Indians as shipwrights, Parkinson says: "in ship-building they probably taught the English far more than they learnt from them".[2] The most important ship-building centres were Goa, Bassein, Surat, Masulipatam, Satgaon, Dacca and Chittagong. The standard size of the ships in those days was 300 to 500 tons though larger ships of 1,500 tons were not unknown. The Gogha vessel, the *Rehemi*, captured by the Portuguese, had a tonnage of 1,500.[3]

Foreign trade

Production in India was oriented mostly to the satisfaction of domestic wants. The country was self-contained and generally self-sufficient in agricultural and industrial goods required for the consumption of her population. Luxury goods which had an element of novelty about them were imported, but they had a limited demand and were purchased by the richer classes more to gratify their curiosity or vanity than to satisfy a genuine need. Imported materials included raw silk, ivory, coral, tortoise-shell, and amber in addition to metals—gold and silver, lead, tin, copper, zinc and quicksilver, —and some minerals such as borax and sulphur.

Besides meeting the home demand, Indian industries catered for the foreign markets as well. Her industrial supremacy which lasted

[1] Balkrishna, *Commercial Relations between England and India, 1600-1757*, pp. 279-81
[2] Parkinson, *Trade of the Eastern Seas*, p. 50
[3] Mookerji, *Economic History*, p. 124

well up to the end of the eighteenth century, gave India an enviable position in the world of commerce and industry. At the beginning of the seventeenth century, "India was the respiratory organ for the circulation and distribution of moneys and commodities of the world; it was the sea wherein all the rivers of trade and industry flowed and thus enriched its inhabitants".[1] In the seventeenth century the country was probably the largest producer of industrial goods in the world. Till about the beginning of the eighteenth century, almost every nation on earth obtained to a large extent its supplies of fine cotton and silk fabrics, spices, indigo, sugar, drugs, precious stones, and many curious works of art from India in exchange for gold and silver.

India continued to be a sink of precious metals. Van Twist writing on the wealth of the kings of Hindustan says "that although there were no gold or silver mines in India, large quantities of both were imported from foreign countries, and it was forbidden to export them".[2] "India is rich in silver", writes Hawkins, "for all nations bring coyne and carry away commodities for the same; and this coyne is buried in India and goeth not out."[3] Terry estimates that "an Indian ship returning from the Red Sea was usually worth two hundred thousand pounds sterling, most of it in gold and silver."[4] He adds, "many silver streames runne thither as all rivers to the sea, and there stay, it being lawful for any nation to bring in silver and fetch commodities, but a crime not less than capitall to carry any great summe thence." From England alone India imported in 50 years from 1708 to 1757, twenty-two million pounds worth of bullion.[5] Only a fraction of the large imports of specie was used for coinage; the rest went into private hoards and manufacture of jewellery.[6]

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[1] Balkrishna, *Commercial Relations, op. cit.*, p 37

[2] See Brij Narain, *Indian Economic Life* (Lahore, 1929), pp. 56-7

[3] *Ibid*, p 57

[4] *Ibid*

[5] Balkrishna, *Commercial Relations, op cit*, p. 208

[6] "The complaint that India hoards the gold supply of the world is as old as Pliny." (*Historiae Naturalis*, VI, 26) The early Muhammadan historian Shahab-ud-Din notices it. (Elliot and Dowson, *History of India*, Vd III, p 583) Bernier complains "It should not escape notice that gold and silver, after circulating in every other quarter of the globe, come at length to be swallowed up, lost in some measures in Hindustan" (*Travels, op. cit* p 202). Dr. Fryer similarly writes, "So that though it be not of the growth of this country, yet the innate Thrift of the *Gentiles* and the small occasion of Foreign expences, and this humour of their of laying up their talent in Napkin, buries the greatest part of the Treasure of the world in India" (*A New Account of East Indies*, Hakluyt Society, p 283). The love of Indians for precious metals and their hoarding habit attracted the attention of early British officers (See Foster, *Letters Received*,, IV, Introduction xxxiii)

By far the most important item of export from the country was cotton piece-goods. India was known for centuries all the world over for the excellence of her fine cotton products. There was a large consumption of Indian manufactures in Rome in ancient times. "The muslins of Dacca were known to the Greeks under the name '*Gangetika*', ... in India the arts of cotton-spinning and cotton-weaving —were in a high state of proficiency two thousand years ago."[1] Pyrard noted that "the principal riches (of India) consist chiefly of silk and cotton stuffs, wherewith everyone from the Cape of Good Hope to China, man and woman, is clothed from hand to foot".[2] This world-wide popularity was based upon the excellence of craftsmanship. To quote Weber, "The skill of Indians in the production of delicate woven fabrics, in the mixing of colours, the working of metals and precious stones, the preparation of essences and in all manners of technical arts, has from early times enjoyed world-wide celebrity".[3]

Moreland[4] estimates that in the seventeenth century the annual exports of cotton goods amounted to nearly 8,000 bales of which 4,700 went to European countries.[2] England alone absorbed annually over a million pieces of Indian calicoes and sooseys during the first half of the eighteenth century. Asked by King James in 1623 as to why England was importing large quantities of Indian calicoes, Thomas Mun and Deputy Governor Morris Abbot are reported to have given the following interesting reply: "It is very usefull and vendes in England, whereby the prizes of lawnes, cambrickes, and other linnen cloth are brought downe; for the rest England is now made the staple for that commoditie, which having first served His Majestie's dominions, the overplus is transported into forrayne partes in the nature of home bredd commoditie".[5] The imports of cotton piece-goods from India by England not only provided for the limited consumption of the commodity in England, but also enriched that country by the great profits that she earned on trade abroad.

Among other articles of export, indigo was of importance. Limited quantities of iron and steel were exported from Masulipatam.

[1] *Imperial Gazetteer*, Vol. III, p 195
[2] *Voyage of Pyrard, op. cit.*, Vol. II, Part I, p 247
[3] Quoted by Pandit Madan Mohan Malaviya in his Minute of Dissent on the *Report of the Indian Industrial Commission*, 1916-18
[4] Moreland, "Indian Exports of Cotton Goods in the Seventeenth Century", *Indian Journal of Economics*, Vol V
[5] Terpstra, *Koromandal*, p. 176, quoted by Brij Narain, *Indian Economic Life*, pp. 54-55

Cotton yarn was exported from the Coromandel coast. Of the articles exported from Gujarat, in addition to cotton goods and indigo, Van Twist mentions opium, *hing* (asafoetida), lac, myrobalans, gambiers, drugs, precious stones, alabaster and marble.

Financial organisation and the commercial classes

All this flourishing trade and industry was organised and financed by Indian merchants. Its volume and extent suggest the existence in the country of a multitude of them. Many of them were settled in the port towns of the country. "The heathenish Indians that dwell in Goa", wrote Linschoten,[1] "are verie rich merchants, and traffique much." "Their shops", he adds, were "full of silks, satins, damasks, porcelain from China and velvet, as well as Linen, shirts and ready-made clothes for all sorts of people". Banias in Goa sold all kinds of precious stones and merchandise. Besides, there were jewellers and dealers in ordinary goods. W. G. de Jongh in the *Gujarat Report* (of 1628-29) says: "One finds the banias all along the coast, that is in Goa, Coromandal, and Bengal, making a living by trade. On the other side ...... many of them are brokers. Among these banias there are many substantial merchants who do a great amount of trade, so that the largest trade and the best is carried on by them, and they do more trade than the Muhammadans. They are sharp businessmen and honest in payment. Among them there are many money-changers, found in all places in these parts".[2] Another traveller, Dr. Fryer, says about conditions of trade in Surat, "as if Nature had designed her both by Sea and Land the Seat of Traffick, would have nothing to hinder her from being the compleatest Mistress thereof in the whole World: if the Disposition of the People be considered, what Masters they are of this Faculty, of Buying at small, and Vending at great Rates, both Native and Exotick Wares! The sordid penury of the Banyans that live poorly and meanly, yet worth a king's Exchequer; and notwithstanding the Governor often finds occasion to fleece them, yet by the quickness of Merchandise passing through this city, they recruit on a suddain".[3]

This class was not confined to the port towns but was spread in all cities and towns all along the trade routes of the country. Multan in the Panjab and the three Sind towns of Bukkur, Sukkur and Rohri

[1] Vide Brij Narain, *op. cit.*, p. 59
[2] *Ibid*, pp 60-61
[3] Fryer, Dr. John, *A New Account of India and Persia*, Vol I, p. 302

were important centres of inland trade in the north-west, and they had in them a flourishing community of merchants comprising mostly Khattris,[1] Lohanas and Bhatias. Lahore, Delhi and Agra were other great centres of commercial activity in northern India where the facility of inland water transport was available. Malda, Rangpur and Kasimbazar were important trade centres in Bengal. In Rajasthan, Jaisalmer, Pali, Jodhpur and Ajmer were older centres which retained their importance in the eighteenth century. Ahmedabad in Gujarat and Poona and Nagpur in the Maratha country rose in importance after 1750. In the south, the most important centres of commerce were the port towns along the Coromandel and Konkan coasts. But in the interior Hyderabad, Bangalore and Tanjore were flourishing seats of trade and commerce. In Uttar Pradesh and Bihar the main trading community was the Bania—Aggarwals, Oswals, Jains and Meshris (Maheshwaris) who were generally regarded as fairly rich castes. Marwaris from Rajasthan were found in appreciable numbers in Maharashtra in the latter half of the eighteenth century. In the south, the Komatis of Andhra Pradesh and the Chettis of the Tamil country were the most important trading communities.[2] It would, however, be incorrect to claim that all Indian traders were rich. There were many among them of ordinary means, and many more who were poor.

Besides the merchants, there was a large class of financiers both big and small. Among the richer and prosperous financiers, mention may be made of the Jagat Seths of Bengal, the Nathjis of Gujarat, and the Chettis of the south. The Jagat Seths of Bengal are said to have possessed a capital of ten crores of rupees at the beginning of the reign of Allahwardi Khan. During their first invasion of Bengal, the Marathas carried away from their *Kothi* two crores of Arcot rupees. But even this big loss did not affect their resources appreciably. Their scale of operations may be judged from the fact that they issued *darshani hundis* (demand drafts) each of the value of one crore rupees. The Nathjis in Surat had similarly vast resources. The banking house financed the East India Company at the time when it was contending with the Indian chiefs.

[1] Banias and Khattris are distinctly mentioned in a Dutch Report of May 25, 1618, as a numerous class of merchants flocking to the port towns from "Indostan"—Agra, Lahore, Delhi and other places Pieter Willemsen, the writer of the Report, thought that if the Portuguese were driven away, the Banias, "who are great and powerful merchants", would be able to supply large quantities of indigo to the Dutch.

[2] Gadgil, D. R., *Origin of the Modern Indian Business Class*, p. 19

It is interesting to note that the Jagat Seths of Bengal came originally from Marwar, and the Nathjis of Surat had migrated from Banaras. As in the east (Bengal) and west (Gujarat), so also in the south it was the single family of Nathu Kothari Chettis which monopolised business and was regarded the richest. Their business extended to Burma, Malaya and the eastern islands. In Ceylon, in the days of the East India Company, the Chettis acted as bankers and supplied the British merchants with cash for their bills of exchange on Madras, Bombay and Calcutta. They had regular agencies in the Presidencies.

These banking houses also exercised great political influence. Seth Mahtab Rai and Seth Sarup Chand helped in the overthrow of Sarfaraz Khan and the enthronement of Allahwardi Khan. Siraj-ud-Daulah was ruined because the Jagat Seth turned against him. The successors of Aurangzeb suffered from lack of money to raise troops, because the bankers found their capability to repay their loans reduced since the *khalsa* lands had been squandered. A similar fate befell the later Peshwas who were always in distress for want of funds.

These big bankers performed all the functions of a modern bank, namely, receiving deposits, giving loans, and issuing *hundis*. Below them were numerous small bankers engaged in the business of financing trade and industry and giving loans to artisans and other producers. Every village had its own money-lender, who not only advanced loans for agricultural operations, but also for purposes of consumption for meeting extraordinary or emergency expenditure on occasions of death, marriage, and for the purchase of cattle, etc., In fact, the entire community was largely in the hands of money-lenders. The peasant, the craftsman, the artisan, the aristocracy and the kings and princes, were all obliged to have dealings with them and were indebted to them for financial assistance in their private and public transactions. "The native prince makes his payments in bonds, and it depends on the bankers what any man shall get for his bonds."[1] If the resources of all the bankers, financiers and money-lenders in the country are taken into account, it would be found that the aggregate capital resources of the country were substantial, though they were scattered widely amidst disparate families, so that their effectiveness for the development of large-scale industry was very limited.

[1] Law in S. C. Hill's *Three Frenchmen in Bengal*, p. 84

Agricultural backwardness

The prosperity of industry and commerce in the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries was not parallelled in agriculture, which remained static and primitive.

There is no direct evidence on the average size of peasants' holdings. The size must have varied from region to region or even from village to village, depending on the soil, fertility of land and the climate. But the limiting factor in the peasants' holdings must have been the capital and the labour available with the peasant family for cultivation, rather than the availability of land, for the supply of the arable area far exceeded the peasants' demand for land. If the holdings were small, it was partly because the cultivator did not possess sufficient resources to manage larger holdings. Even so the average size of holdings in Mughal India must have been larger than what it was in the latter half of the nineteenth century, for, in the first instance, the number of people engaged in agriculture at the earlier period was much smaller and secondly, the proportion of population engaged in agriculture was smaller. Generally speaking, the farms in Mughal times were each of a size that a family could easily and economically manage, and the problem of fragmentation, subdivision and uneconomic holdings had not arisen till the end of the eighteenth century.

The peasant in the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries was better off than his successor in the nineteenth century, not only in respect of the larger size of his holdings, but also because the average productivity of land was higher in Mughal times. The average medium (average of good, middling and bad) produce of *polaj* land in Akbar's time was 12 maunds 38 seers of wheat and the same amount of rice per acre. This estimate relates to the tract of the country that is now known as Uttar Pradesh. In the first decade of the twentieth century, according to official statistics, the average outturn of wheat in this tract was 12 maunds 31 seers and that of rice 10 maunds 13 seers.[1] Some other official statistics put the figure of the average yield per acre even lower. Two facts explain the fall in the productivity of land in the later period: (*i*) with the increase in the pressure of population, cultivation was extended to inferior soils which were much less productive than the rich fertile soil occupied earlier; and (*ii*) the constant cropping of land over the

[1] Datta, K. L., *Report on the Rise of Prices* (1914), pp. 69-70

centuries without properly manuring it or leaving it fallow to allow it to recuperate its productive powers exhausted the soil and reduced its productivity.

The most important item of agricultural produce was foodgrains. In the Deccan, according to Nuniz[1] (who came to this part of the country in the fourteenth century) wheat and gram, rice and millet were the crops grown of which "this last is the grain which is most consumed. Next to it is betel which people always eat and carry in their mouth." Khafi Khan also states that *jowar* and *bajra* were the main support of the people of the Deccan and were extensively grown. In the north also millets supplied the major part of the articles of food of the people and formed the principal crop. In Oudh, however, excellent rice, "matchless for whiteness, delicacy, fragrance and wholesomeness", was being produced. Wheat was not an important crop in Uttar Pradesh at the time. Even Akbar's court at Agra was said to be importing wheat from Bengal.

Next to foodgrains, cotton and sugarcane were the most widely grown crops. Cotton was mentioned by Thevenot to be grown everywhere and sugarcane at some places only. The cultivation of tobacco, an important commercial crop, was introduced in Gujarat first by the Portuguese at about the beginning of the seventeenth century. Consumption of tobacco grew rapidly in the country and with it increased the area under its cultivation. Opium and indigo were the other two commercial crops of some importance grown in the country. Their production was confined to certain areas in Bihar. Cotton was used mostly in the home for the production of cotton cloth, and sugarcane was used for the manufacture of *gur* and white sugar.[2]

Trade in foodgrains was limited. After supplying the needs of the urban populations, the villager stored his surplus corn in good years in large underground pits. These stores served as buffer stock for meeting fluctuations in food production caused by climatic factors. British revenue records mention that the practice of keeping foodgrains in stores was widespread and very common in the India of pre-British days. In fact, this practice fell into disuse only after 1860 when a brisk export trade in foodgrains developed in the country consequent on the construction of the railways and the opening

[1] See Sewell, *A Forgotten Empire*, p. 386

[2] Sugar of extreme whiteness was manufactured in Aurangzeb's reign at Biana in Agra district. There was also the famous sugar candy of Kalpi near Jalaun. Buchanan mentions the manufacture of fine sugar in the south.

of the Suez Canal. Pits for storage were so constructed that the grain could be kept "sound and good for 40 to 50 years."[1] Evidence for the existence of such pits is available in areas as wide apart from each other as the Panjab[2] in the north and Mysore in the south.

The country was not free from the danger of famines. On the contrary, no less than twenty-four famines and dearths are recorded to have occurred over a period of 200 years from 1595 to 1792. Most of them were of a mild nature, but great famines like that of 1630, which affected Vijayanagar, Deccan and Gujarat, were very destructive; they caused untold misery and heavy mortality. Van Twist describes the horrors in these words: "So little rain fell that the seed sown was lost, and no grass grew. Cattle died. In towns and villages, in fields and on roads, men lay dead in great numbers, causing such a stench that it was terrible to use the ways. For want of grass, cattle fed on the corpses; men took the carcasses of beasts to eat; some in desperation went about searching for bones which had been gnawed by dogs."[3]

Evidently famines in those days were caused by the non-availability of food in the affected area. But the occasional occurrence of such calamities does not by itself indicate the existence of deficiency of food in the country as a whole. Even during the great famines of 1630 and 1647 "there were ample supplies in other parts of the country."[4] But the affected areas could not immediately be relieved because the only means of land transport available at the time were the pack animals which could not be moved across long distances without large quantities of fodder or water, the cost of which was prohibitive. The limiting factor in the mitigation of the horrors of famine was the non-availability of easy and rapid means of transport rather than the availability of corn in the country. The horrors of the famines of the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries were, therefore, fundamentally different from those that visited the country after

[1] Elliot, C A., *Famine Report of Mysore*, p. 8 Mr Elliot remarks (p. 8) that in former times famine was staved off by the consumption of "the surplus *ragi* (millets) stored in underground pits, from which it is withdrawn in times of scarcity as the grain will keep sound and good for 40 or 50 years."

[2] Ross, D , *Land of Five Rivers & Sindh*", p. 118. Ross states, "In seasons when there is little demand for grain it is stored in large pits about ten feet deep, lined and covered with mud plaster. Corn may be kept in this way for twenty years. When opened and exposed to the air for some time it is found quite wholesome and fit for food".

[3] Vide Moreland, *From Akbar to Aurangzeb*, p. 212

[4] *Ibid*, p 210

1860 when owing to the exportation of foodgrains in normal years, distress was caused in the years of deficient rainfall by the extraordinary scarcity and dearness of foodgrains. In the latter case, food stocks and not the means of transport were the limiting factor.

During the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries in normal times food supplies were sufficient for the needs of the country. This stands in favourable contrast to the conditions during the latter half of the nineteenth century when, according to the best authority, "one-fifth or 40 millions of the population of India go through life on insufficient food."[1] Sir Charles Elliot, speaking about the conditions during the latter half of the nineteenth century admits: "I do not hesitate to say that half of our agricultural population never knows from year's end to year's end what it is to have their hunger fully satisfied."[2] Thus, in spite of frequent and horrible famines, the agricultural population in normal times in the pre-British days was better off than during the nineteenth century.

Prices and wages

As the means of communication and transport were deficient, and trade in foodgrains and other agricultural produce was limited, prices showed wide variations from place to place. Generally speaking, foodgrains were cheaper in Bengal than in northern India and cheaper in northern India than in Gujarat and other parts of western India. But ignoring these regional differences and taking the country as a whole, foodgrains and other necessaries of life were extraordinarily cheap in pre-British times as compared with modern times. Here are a few instances. Wheat in northern India was around 90 seers to a rupee in 1600, 107 seers in 1650 and 131 seers (in Bengal) in 1729. *Jowar* sold at 108·5 seers a rupee in 1600, and 128 seers in 1650. *Bajra* was 181 seers a rupee in 1600, and 214 seers in 1650. Gram sold at 130 seers in 1600, 160 seers in 1650, and 171 seers (in Bengal) in 1729. Rice was the dearest of the foodgrains but even so sold at 54 seers in 1600, 64 seers in 1650 and 153

[1] Hunter, *England's Work in India*, printed in "The India of the Queen".
A comprehensive enquiry on the subject was ordered by Lord Dufferin in 1888. The results of that enquiry which were not published, run into about 900 printed pages and these generally confirm the opinion expressed by Messrs. Hunter and Elliot. (*Famine Proceedings of the Government of India*, December 1888, Nos 1-29).

[2] Vide *Madras Christian College Magazine*, October 1887, p. 231, quoted in Madras Board of Revenue Proceedings, No. 186, April, 27, 1888.

seers (Bengal) in 1729.[1] As late as 1807 it was quoted at 120 seers in north Bengal.

Among other commodities of daily consumption may be mentioned *ghee*, oil, sugar and salt. *Ghee* was 10·3 seers a rupee in northern India in 1600, 7 to 8·75 seers a rupee in 1661 and 9·6 seers in 1729. Oil sold at 13·5 seers in 1600, 20 to 23 seers in 1661, and 21 seers in 1729. Sugar was priced at 19·3 seers a rupee in 1600 and 14 seers in 1661. Salt was available at 67 seers to a rupee in 1600.

Prices in India showed two types of fluctuations—regional and periodical. The former was the result of the difficulties and heavy cost of transport of bulky agricultural produce from one place to another. Before the railways were constructed, it was a common occurrence that in time of famine, wheat might be selling at three to four seers a rupee at one place and 30 to 40 seers at a place not more than a hundred miles away.

The Mughals gave the country political unity, but they failed to unite the different parts of this vast subcontinent into one common market for the country's produce with uniform price levels and countrywide competition. It was left to the British to bring about that economic cohesion among different parts of the country which is so essential for creating national unity and consciousness among the people of a vast country.

In the absence of any well developed market and trade in foodgrains, it was natural that every region and even every village should be self-sufficient in food supply. That indeed was the case in India. But this state of affairs had its own disadvantages. The peasant could not dispose of his surplus in years when the crops were plentiful. He was forced to hoard the surplus or sell it very cheap. On the other hand, when the rains were deficient and crops failed, he could not supplement his stocks by purchases from outside except at ruinous prices. The margin of fluctuations in prices in the same locality from year to year was very wide indeed. For instance, in Murshidabad wheat was 20 seers a rupee in 1712 and 3 maunds 30 seers in 1729; barley was 27 seers in 1712 and 8 maunds in 1729; rice sold at 10 seers in 1712 and 4 maunds 15 seers (coarse) in 1729.

The price level is a matter of great consequence to the wage-earners. In the India of the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries, wage labour was exclusively an urban phenomenon. In the villages, the

[1] Mookerji, *Economic History of India*, p. 46 (Table)

menials as well as agricultural labourers and artisans were remunerated for their work by the allotment of a share in the produce of the farm that they served. Money wages were paid to the ordinary and skilled labourers employed in the town and to the lower ranks of government servants.

In Akbar's time the rate of daily wage paid to slaves and the lowest grades of workers like bamboo-cutters, brick-layers, sawyers, varnishers, water-carriers, stable coolies and all-day unskilled labourers, was 3 to 4 pice a day, while skilled artisans, carpenters, masons and workers in lime, were paid 9 to 10½ pice.[1] In Jahangir's time the ordinary worker was reported to be paid 5 to 6 pice per day, and a skilled artisan double that amount.

By the middle of the eighteenth century the prevailing rate of daily wages in Calcutta was 6 pice for ordinary labourers and 10 pice for skilled workers or practically the same as that recorded in Jahangir's time. It appears that during the Mughal period, the highest rate of wages was reached in Jahangir's time.

Compared to present standards, money wages of ordinary labourers in Jahangir's time look extremely low. This does not, however, mean that the labouring classes in Mughal times were poorer than they were in British times. The provisions and foodstuffs being so cheap in Mughal times, the real wages of the labourers were not very much lower, in fact, in many cases these were far higher than the wages earned by their descendants 200 years later. The agricultural labourer, except in times of scarcity, had far more to eat in the days of the Mughals than under the British.

The ordinary urban labourer, likewise, obtained much larger quantities of foodgrains in exchange for his day's labour. Thus in terms of foodgrains the daily wages of an unskilled worker in Jahangir's time worked out at 12·5 seers of barley or 10·23 seers of *jowar* or 16·7 seers of *bajra*. By the first quarter of the nineteenth century, the corresponding quantities of corn obtained by unskilled workers had fallen to 2·3 to 2 9 seers of barley, 2·1 to 2·6 seers of *jowar* and 2 to 2·5 seers of *bajra*. In Jahangir's time, an able-bodied worker could thus maintain a family of 4 to 5 persons on his daily earnings. One hundred and fifty years later, though money wages

[1] One rupee was equal to 80 to 90 pice in the time of Akbar. In Jahangir's time one rupee fetched 45 to 56 pice.

had risen by about a pice a day, real wages had fallen so much that excepting tender children and the very old, all members of the worker's family were obliged to work for their living, the earnings of the head of the family being inadequate to maintain the whole family.

Consumption and the standard of the living of masses

There were poor classes then as now and their standard of living was low. But the poorer classes then had more of the necessaries of life and they obtained more nourishing food in Mughal times than in the period which succeeded. Unfortunately, when the poorer classes in Europe were improving their standard of living on account of the economic progress in their countries, those in India suffered a fall in their consumption due to the economic decline of the country.[1]

The fall in consumption by the poor affected mostly articles of food. The use of butter (*ghee*) by the mass of the population seems to have been very common in the seventeenth century. According to Pelsaert[2] and de Laet, the evening meal of the common people consisted of *khichri*, which they ate with *ghee* or butter. In northern India people ate bread made of millets and wheat, but here also, the supplies of milk and *ghee* were more ample except perhaps in north Bihar and Bengal, and these entered the general consumption in larger quantities than they do now. Moreland, who otherwise is opposed to the view that the poor people in India in the seventeenth century enjoyed a higher standard of living than they did in the nineteenth century, admits that "fats, that is to say, butter (*ghee*) and the seeds furnishing edible oils were, relatively to grain, distinctly cheaper than now, and in this respect the lower classes were better off as consumers, though not as producers".[3] The varieties of foodgrains consumed by the population differed from place to place according to the variations in the local production and from one part of the year to the other according to the crop reaped in the season. Thus in northern India people ate maize, *bajra* and gram in winter, but they made their cakes of bread, in spring and summer, from wheat.

[1] Adam Smith argues that wages rise, remain stationary, or fall according as the national income is rising, constant or falling respectively The eighteenth and nineteenth centuries were for India a period of decline and it is natural, therefore, that the labouring classes should have suffered a decline in their standard of living during this period. (*Wealth of Nations*, Book I, Chapter VIII, Modern Library edition, pp. 69-73).

[2] An account of the life at Agra (1626) quoted by Moreland, *From Akbar to Aurangzeb*, p. 199

[3] Moreland, *India at the Death of Akbar*, p. 271

According to Terry, the Indian wheat was of a far superior quality compared to its European counterpart, and of it "people make such pure well-relished bread that I may speak of it, which one said of Leige, it is *Panis, pane melior*".[1] Three kinds of bread were noticed in the bazaars of Lahore—ordinary *chapatis*, *kulchas* and *roghani*. As in the case of the rice-eating population who ate butter with *khichri*, so also the people in northern India had "great abundance of other good provisions as butter and cheese by reason of their great number of cattle, sheep and goats".[2] Both in quantity and quality of food-grains consumed as also in the use of *ghee*, butter and milk, there is no doubt that the mass of the Indian population was better off in the seventeenth than in the nineteenth century.

Evidence on the consumption of two other necessaries of life, namely, sugar and salt, is, however, not so conclusive. According to Moreland, refined white sugar was a luxury beyond the reach of ordinary people in Mughal times,[3] while in terms of grain, "salt was more than double the present price".[4] It is wrong, however, to draw inferences about the consumption of necessaries from the relative prices of those articles. For, against Moreland's view, there is the evidence of Terry who makes a prominent mention of the "great store of salt and abundance of sugar growing in India". White sugar might have been costly so that the poor could ill afford it for their daily use, but *gur* and *shakar* (unrefined brown sugar) were in wide use even in the poor households and the common man did not probably have less of these in Mughal times than he has today. As for salt, Moreland seems to be on firmer ground, especially about the Deccan. Dr. Fryer, for instance, states that in the Deccan salt "is so precious up the country as to be proverbially preferred to Bread, they saying, *whose salt they eat*, as we, *whose bread*".[5]

The picture of poverty of the Indian masses in the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries painted by the European travellers and other contemporary writers, therefore, is based more on the scantiness of clothing, miserable dwellings, poor utensils and lack of furniture than on the lack of adequate quantities of nourishing diet. Fitch says that in northern India, "the people go all naked

[1] Mookerjee, *Economic History of India*, *op cit*, p 58
[2] *Ibid*
[3] Moreland, *India at the Death of Akbar*, p. 272
[4] *Ibid*, p. 271
[5] Fryer, John. *A New Account of East India and Persia*, Vol. I, (edited by William Crooke, London, 1909), p. 345

save a little cloth bound about their middle. In the winter the men wear quilted gowns of cotton and quilted caps with a slit to look out at and so tied down beneath their ears."[1] In the fifteenth century Nikitin[2] found the Hindus of the Deccan "all naked and barefooted". According to Barbosa[3] they went "naked from the waist upwards" and wore "small turbans on their heads". About the Hindus of Gujarat Varthema[4] records that "some of them go naked, and others cover only their privities", while in Vijayanagar, the "common people go quite naked, with the exception of a piece of cloth about their middle".

A similar picture emerges with regard to dwelling houses and furniture. Pelsaert tells us[5]· "Their houses are built of mud, with thatched roofs. Furniture there is little or none—some earthenware pots to hold water and for cooking, and two beds, for here man and wife do not sleep together. Their bedclothes are scanty, merely a sheet, or perhaps two, serving both as under-and oversheet". Manrique, writing about Bengal, observes: "This people usually live in huts of mud and clay, low and thatched with straw or olas, which is the leaf of a palm. They keep their dwellings very clean, usually scouring them over constantly with the excrement of cattle dung mixed with mud, this being used not only on the walls but also the floors, while the place where they take their meals must thus be scoured daily, some sects among them scouring it afresh before each meal".[6] Dr. Fryer speaks of the houses of the poor in Karnatak and Malabar as "little Hovels or Hogsties, the best of them scarce worthy of the Name of a Booth".[7] Even in the capital city of Agra, Jourdain found that "most part of the city is straw houses, which once or twice a year is burnt to the ground".[8]

Next, with regard to furniture, there is the evidence of de Laet, who records that "furniture was exceedingly rare, consisting only of a few earthen vessels, bedsteads, and thin and scanty beddings".[9] Linschoten writing about the west coast similarly observes that "the household stuff of the people is mats of straw, both to sit and lie

[1] Mookerjee, *Economic History*, op cit, p 60
[2] See Moreland, *India at the Death of Akbar*, p. 274
[3] *Ibid.*
[4] *Ibid.*
[5] See Moreland, *From Akbar to Aurangzeb*, p. 199
[6] *Travels of Sebastien Manrique* (1629-43), Vol. 1, p. 64
[7] Fryer, J., *A New Account of East India and Persia*, *op cit*, Vol I, p. 136
[8] Moreland, *India at the Death of Akbar*, p. 273
[9] *Ibid*

upon and tables, table-clothes and napkins made of plantain-leaves".[1]

While there can be little doubt about the correctness of these notices, the inference of general misery that is generally sought to be drawn from these needs modification in two important respects. Firstly, all these observations come from foreign writers in whose countries the manner of living and dress of the common people stood in direct contrast to that found in India. Under the circumstances, it was natural for them to comment adversely on the simplicity of the Indian dwellings, and the scantiness of the Indian dress. Secondly, apart from custom and tradition, the manner of dressing and building of houses in a country are determined by the climatic conditions.[2] India has a warm climate as compared with most of the European countries and the scantiness of clothes, especially in the summer months in India, is dictated by the climate of the country. A severe winter of the type that is experienced in Europe is unknown in India except in the extreme north. For the most part of the year, therefore, people do not need clothes except to cover their nakedness, and in the villages even today the people have the same manner of dress and living all over the country as they had in the seventeenth century. The scantiness of their clothes and their mud houses do not so much prove the existence of poverty as they indicate a way of life which has persisted in India throughout the centuries of which there is recorded history and which is still prevalent.

The conclusion then is that as far as the poor classes of the people were concerned, they had few wants and these were met adequately from what the country produced. There was no general starvation or inadequate nourishment except in periods of famine. But they did not have any surplus even in normal years to accumulate and build up economic reserves for meeting calamities like famines. Their clothing was scanty and their dwellings poor; but in respect of these necessaries they probably did not feel the want of more than they had and they hardly ever made an effort to improve their lot. Life was simple and contented and the simple and few wants were easily met so that the struggle for existence was not

[1] *Ibid.*

[2] "The shelter and the clothing which are indispensable in one country may be in no way necessary, and a labourer in Hindustan may continue to work with perfect vigour, though receiving, as his natural wages, only such a supply of covering as would be insufficient to preserve a labourer in Russia from perishing."—Torrens, R., *An Essay on the External Corn Trade*, p 68

so hard as it has become today. This simplicity and contentment had its own advantages, but it had one great drawback too. The common man in India did not feel the same urge for improvement that his Western counterpart felt in the sixteenth and the following centuries, and he did not struggle for economic progress in the manner that the European did.

Factors retarding the economic development of India in the eighteenth century

An examination of the pattern of consumption of the upper classes brings out another fact which retarded the progress of this country in the economic field. The princes, nobles and provincial chiefs in the Middle Ages lived in grand style and in great luxury. The tone was set by the kings and their manner and way of living were imitated by the nobles and the courtiers to the extent that their respective resources permitted. Large expenditure was incurred on delicacies like costly imported fruit, on servants and retainers, on houses and elephants, on marriages and dowries, and on building fort-like houses. A large part of the income was spent on jewellery and costly dresses. The expenditure on horses and elephants was only next to that on jewellery. Each noble kept servants in hundreds for his stables and his household. A large sum of money was spent on making presents—the chiefs making presents to the king and in return receiving gifts from those immediately below them, and so on. The luxury of the Mughal court, according to de Laet, was simply indescribable, for "their one concern in life was to secure a surfeit of every kind of pleasure". Sir Thomas Roe similarly described Mughal nobility as "nothing but voluptuousness and wealth confusedly intermingled". One of the reasons for this lavishness was that all the accumulated wealth of a noble after his death reverted to the king's treasury so that the noble had a strong incentive for spending all that he earned during his own lifetime. This, together with the irregularity with which the income came, resulted in the habit of living beyond one's means. In this respect the nobles were not very different from their counterparts in Europe who, in the medieval times, were known for the large army of retainers that they kept and for their extravagant ways of living. In the case of Indian Omrahs there was the additional obligation on their part of making costly presents to the king on various occasions. So great was the expense involved in this custom of making presents that Bernier believes it

to be responsible for the widespread indebtedness among them.[1] Accumulation of capital in the circumstances was not easy. Nor was there available much opportunity for the profitable investment of savings. Some nobles lived frugally and accumulated large fortunes, but ultimately they also spent them in marriages, dowries and buildings rather than in investment in business or industry.

The only class which accumulated capital was the merchants, and among them just a few big families. The rest of this class did not possess any large funds for the expansion of trade and industry. The system of deposit banking had not yet developed. Thus India in the seventeenth and early half of the eighteenth century lacked two important elements of economic progress—the urge on the part of the masses to make progress, and the accumulation of capital by the rich and the middle classes for the improvement and expansion of industry, commerce and agriculture.

There could be little doubt about the ultimate outcome of the contact of the progressive West with the static East. The competition was unequal. One was dynamic and progressive; the other static and conservative. The medieval society in India could not have continued for long in that state, for already it was showing signs of decadence. The establishment of foreign rule accelerated the process of decay and laid the foundation of a new social order.

[1] Bernier, F, *Travels*, *op. cit.*, pp 65, 271

CHAPTER FIVE

CULTURAL LIFE—EDUCATION, ARTS AND LITERATURE

No analysis of the conditions which obtained in the eighteenth century will be complete without an account of the currents of thought prevailing in the times. How far ideas determine political changes and how far ideas are themselves the product of the material conditions of life are problems difficult to disentangle. That they are interlinked may be safely assumed; that the understanding of history is promoted by the study of both may be taken for granted.

Now, the history of every country has followed a different course. Some countries have been subject to frequent political vicissitudes of a far-reaching character more than have others, in whose case life has run more evenly. In Europe Italy is the example of the first type and England that of the second. In ancient times Italy rose to greatness which lasted for nearly seven hundred years. Then a swift decline followed and Italy was conquered and overrun by the barbarians. A civilisation grew up again on its soil which blossomed during the period of the Renaissance. But this was in its turn overthrown by the invaders from France. There ensued a period of eclipse, from which Italy rose again into prominence as a result of the endeavours of its prophets, statesmen and soldiers, such as Mazzini, Cavour and Garibaldi.

England offers a shining example of the continuity of culture. Since the Norman conquest, its evolution has been continuous and undisturbed by foreign conquest.

Indian thought and culture

India's history has followed the pattern of Italy rather than that of England, but with a difference. In Italy society, polity and culture were all involved in the revolutionary changes. In India, on the other hand, the changes were not radical and only affected the rulers.

The conquests of India brought about changes in administration which were superficial. The composition of society remained largely unmodified. The new religions and languages were merely additions to old religions and indigenous languages. A remarkable continuity

was maintained within the Hindu and Muslim cultures. The upper classes among them continued to follow the old traditions—in faith and worship, in personal laws, and in the use of the classical languages.

These general observations, however, need qualification. In the first place, what are known as the Hindu and Muslim cultures were not uniform in their patterns. They were not homogeneous, self-consistent simple identities. The Hindu society was not a unity. It was composed of a heterogeneous mass of peoples of differing degrees of culture. In different regions there were different languages. In the past when education was limited to a small minority of high caste Hindus, the culture of the upper ten was different from that of the majority among whom a very considerable section was steeped in ignorance, superstition and poverty. There were again differences of cult and of laws, gradations of status, occupation and wealth even among the middle and the inferior castes. Hinduism thus presented a panorama of beliefs and practices which extended from the profoundest truths of philosophy to the grossest forms of superstition.

The divisions among the Muslims were not as sharp and rigid as those among the Hindus, but they too had their higher and lower classes—the *sharif*, comprising the ruling group of warriors, scholars and priests, and the *ajlaf* or the lowly and the mean, who followed occupations considered unworthy of the upper class. Each group among the Muslims contained varying proportions of converts whose habits and customs, ways of living and beliefs approximated to those of the original group from which they came. The fresh arrivals from the Muslim countries and their descendants of the first or second generation were culturally different from the converts and the families of long standing. It has to be remembered that till the death of Aurangzeb a ceaseless stream of emigrants—scholars, soldiers and traders from Iran, Afghanistan and Trans-Oxiana—continued to pour into India, attracted by the fame and splendour of the Mughal empire and the opportunities of service and wealth which it offered. They tended to weaken the forces of assimilation.

Nevertheless, the contacts of centuries inevitably produced their effects. Beginning from the fifteenth century Hindu reformers like Kabir and Nanak sought to minimise differences between the Hindus and Muslims and to bring them together. The Muslim

Sufis and saints, especially those who followed the teachings of Ibn Arabi, became interested in the principles of Vedanta and the practices of Yoga, and were influenced by them. The Hindu and Muslim writers contributed to the development of the modern Indian languages and literatures. The artists evolved styles in architecture, painting and music, in which the Islamic elements were fused with the Indian ingredients. The reformed religions based on devotion mainly attracted the middle sections of society although many among the higher and lower classes were also drawn towards them. The arts and letters were patronised by kings, princes and landlords who encouraged scholars to translate books from Indian languages into Persian and *vice versa*, and induced the artists attached to their courts to execute works in the mixed style.

The Hindu *bhakti* schools spread all over India and the *bhakti* cult in its impersonal and personal forms captivated the popular mind. Although it is impossible to estimate the number of its votaries accurately, it will not be far from the truth to say that the cult predominated in the middle layers of society—traders, artisans, craftsmen, peasants.

Similarly *tasawwuf* (mysticism) was spread widely. Every Musalman of the upper class considered it necessary to join one of the Sufi orders, to adopt a Pir who would guide the disciple in his mystic pilgrimage. Of the many orders, the Chishtia, founded in India by Khwaja Muin-ud-Din, was the most popular, and in spiritual outlook and exercises, nearest to the Hindu school of *bhakti*. Both founded their faith upon the principle of pantheistic monism (*advaita*, *wahdat-al-wujud*), and both followed similar methods of self-control and purification (yoga and *dhikr*). Both regarded song and music as contributory to the inducement of mystic states—contemplation and unification. Every Muslim scholar and theologian studied both Shariat (law) and Tariqat (mysticism). Likewise the Hindu scholars studied both Dharma Shastra and Vedanta.

Among the Hindu and Muslim learned men, there were roughly three schools of thought. The first was the school of the traditionists or the conservatives who insisted upon strict conformity to the literal meaning of the sacred texts and unquestioning obedience to religious injunctions based upon revelation. They discounted a rational approach to dogma and doctrine and demanded complete surrender to authority. Because of their strict adherence to the word of the

law and their distrust of reason, they were known as externalists *(ulama-i-zahiri)*. Their insistence upon action in accordance with the commands of the sacred canon places them in the category of believers in the doctrine of justification by works.

The second school consisted of those who felt irked by external acts of worship and unthinking compliance with commands and prohibitions. For them the essence of religion lay in the love of God and of man, devotion to the Supreme Reality, search for perfection, mastery over self and inner illumination. Justification by faith was their viewpoint.

The third school sought to bridge the gulf between the two, to reconcile the claims of law and of love, to justify religious injunction by reason, to restrain intolerance without abandoning the basic principles of the creed.

Of the Mughal emperors, Akbar supported the second school, Jahangir and Shah Jahan the third, and Aurangzeb the first. Among the followers of the three schools, Dara Shukoh, the translator of the Upanishads, was the most prominent exponent of the second school, Shah Waliullah of the third school and Shaikh Ahmad Sarhindi of the first school.

Dara Shukoh was a disciple of Mulla Shah Badakhshani who was the pupil of the famous Sufi Mian Mir, a Qadiri saint (A.D. 1635). The point of view that they represent is an echo of the teachings of Ibn Arabi (1165-1240), the great master, who exercised supreme influence on the development of Islamic mysticism. In religious law, Ibn Arabi followed the school of the Zahirites who disliked the pedantry of the legal schools, and preferred the logical method of demonstration. He rejected authority (*taqlid*) in doctrinal matters and expressed faith in the inner light to guide man on the right path. He believed in the essential unity of God (*wahdat-al-wujud*), devoid of every attribute, quality and relation. He held that the universe of space, time and causation was merely phenomenal, a manifestation of the one reality. In man the Real and the Phenomenal meet and the divine in him, which is obscured by the transient, strives to attain to the knowledge of his true being. Ibn Arabi was a monist whose opinion was that all forms of religious belief were relatively true. He pointed out that according to the Quran "wheresoever ye turn, there is the face, that is, the reality of Allah".[1] He said, "my heart is receptive of all forms; it is

[1] Quran, ii, 109

a pasture for gazelles, i.e. objects of love, and a convent for Christian monks, and a temple for idols, and the pilgrim's *kaaba*, the tablet of the Jewish Law and the Quran. I follow the religion of love; whatever way Love's camels take that is my religion and my faith is love".[1] For him, the saint (*wali*) who had attained the beatific vision was superior to the prophet (*nabi*) and the messenger of God (*rusul*), because the saint participated in divine attributes and sainthood was eternal and everlasting. The mystic path leading to this goal transcended law.

Mulla Shah, the teacher of Dara, in distinguishing true faith from the observance of outward ritual, is reported to have stated: "O, you who have faith in the Real, do not go near ritual prayer (*namaz*) in the state of intoxication (*sakr*) and bewilderment (*masti*). Under limitation, the state of intoxication is higher than the rendering of prayers. . . . For if the bewilderment is for worldly and profane then the approach to prayer is forbidden, so that prayer may not be polluted and this is a condition of honouring prayer. But if the intoxication is transcendant, then again approach to prayer is forbidden, for in this case it is showing respect to intoxication. When the prayed one and the carpet of prayer disappear, who reads the prayer ?"[2]

Dara Shukoh propagated these principles through his writings, of which *Majma' al Bahrain* (the Meeting of two Oceans) and *Sirr-i-Akbar* (the Great Secret, a translation of the Upanishads), are the most famous. Both Ibn Arabi and Dara Shukoh were condemned as heretics by certain sections of their co-religionists, and Dara had to forfeit his life for his convictions. The defeat and execution of Dara gave a terrific blow to his school of thought. The hostility of the reigning emperor, Aurangzeb, and the tempestuous times succeeding his death, were inauspicious for a creed of such gentle reasonableness and broad tolerance, and so the ideas of Dara survived only as an inspiration in the life of stray individuals and in the outpourings of the poet's muse.

The most uncompromising opponent of the school of mystic liberalism was Shaikh Ahmad Sarhindi, whose teachings may be traced back to Ibn-i-Taimiya (1263-1328), a professor of Hambali

[1] Ibn Arabi, *Tarjumanul-Ashwaq*; Nicholson, R. A, *A Literary History of the Arabs* (Cambridge, 1930), p 403

[2] Dara Shukoh, *Hasanat-al-Arfin* (text), p. 32

law at Damascus. Ibn-i-Taimiya was a literalist and traditionist who denounced innovations (*bidat*), an anthropomorphist who interpreted the Quran in the overt and manifest sense of its words, an exegete who attacked Greek philosophy, because it led to unbelief.

Shaikh Ahmad Sarhindi (b. 1563-4, d. 1624-25), upon whom descended the mantle of Ibn-i-Taimiya, laid the greatest emphasis upon two things: (i) submission to laws, precepts and traditions (*itba-i-sunnat*), and (ii) desistance from innovations (*rafa-i-bidat*). He reproved the use of reason in matters of faith, and held the opinion that "if reason were sufficient the Greek philosophers who had adopted reason as their guide should not have fallen in the melting pot of error. They should have recognised the glory of God more than all others, yet they are the most ignorant of men in the matter of essence and attributes of the Glorious King".[1] His theory was: "as the mode of reason transcends the mode of sense and, therefore, whatever is not perceived through the senses is apprehended by reason, in the same way the mode of prophecy transcends the mode of reason, for whatever cannot be apprehended by reason is known through prophecy, and whatever transcending the mode of rational devotion does not demonstrate the divine truth, is a denial of the mode of prophecy".[2] According to him he who wants to be a philosopher must belong to the company of Satan and, therefore, he will be a loser and will be disappointed. He believed, "God sends His message through prophets in regard to His essence and attributes and in regard to actions whether they were in agreement with or against His will." He approved of what Ghazali had stated in his tract, *Al Munqidh min al Dhalal*, that the philosophers had plagiarised the sciences of medicine and astronomy from the books of the prophets, extracted the knowledge of the properties of medicines from their pages, and learnt culture and morals from the Sufis (who were always followers of the prophets).

As the Prophet is the vehicle of God's commands, obedience to him is equivalent to obedience to God. It follows that the true believers must conform in thought, word and deed to the injunctions and practices of the Prophet. Nothing which deviates from them is permissible to a Muslim. The Shaikh deprecated the distinction which some theologians made between good and evil innovations

[1] *Maktubat-i-Imam-i-Rabbani*, Vol III, letter No. 23
[2] *Ibid*

(*bidat-i-hasan* and *bidat-i-saiyyeh*). He asked, "if every novelty was an innovation and every innovation an error, then how could any innovation be regarded as good or proper, for according to the traditions (Hadith, or the sayings of the Prophet), every innovation, without exception, supersedes laws and precepts, and hence every innovation is bad".[1]

Shaikh Ahmad's condemnation of innovations was all comprehensive and brooked no exception. Shiism was an innovation which was worse than infidelity. It was, therefore, necessary to refrain from associating with the Shias. In a letter to Shaikh Farid he wrote: "It is certain that the wickedness of associating with an innovator is greater than the wickedness of association with an infidel. The worst innovators are the group of persons who entertain hatred towards the companions of the Prophet, and the exalted Quran itself calls them infidels".[2] He wrote *Radde Rawafiz*, a treatise in condemnation of the Shiite doctrine that the Ali was superior to all the other companions of the Prophet. He expressed disapproval of singing and dancing (*sama wa raqs*). In big matters as in trival ones he insisted upon rigid conformity; for instance, he considered that it was improper to let the loose end of the turban fall over the left side, for it was against the practice of the Prophet who placed it between the two shoulders.

Shaikh Ahmad was fiercely hostile towards the Hindus, whom he regarded as infidels, and considered nothing more pleasing to God than their humiliation and disgrace. He looked upon "the realization of the poll-tax (Jazia) as a means of heaping contumely and scorn upon the infidels."

The Muslims had adopted many Hindu manners and customs—marriage ceremonies, funeral observances, homage to and intercession of supernatural agencies, caste distinctions, aversion to cow killing and widow remarriage. Shaikh Ahmad declared them wholly reprehensible and worthy of rejection. He desired that the Muslims should live like the Arabs of the time of the Prophet, and should refuse to assimilate any of the ways of the vast majority of the non-Muslim inhabitants of India.

So far as Sufism was concerned, he had been initiated in all its principal orders in India, but he preferred the Naqshbandia order because it regarded meticulous obedience to religious law (Shariat)

[1] Muhammad Mian, *Ulama-i-Hind ka Shandar Mazi*, Vol. I, p. 174
[2] Imam-i-Rabbani, *Maktubat*, Vol. I, letter No. 54

as superior to mystic discipline and knowledge. He, however, deprecated the claims of the Sufis that the enlightened perfect saint (*wali*) occupied a higher status than a prophet (*nabi*). Similarly, he repudiated the doctrine of pantheistic monism (*wahdat-al-wujud*), and in its place popularised the theory of the unity of attributes (*wahdat-al-shudud*).

In short, according to him, purification of faith through Quran and Hadith, as interpreted by the just and right-minded Ulama, strict adherence to law and abandonment of all innovations, were the main principles of Islam, which it was the bounden duty of all Muslims to follow.

Shaikh Ahmad Sarhindi was very conscious of his high mission. He corresponded extensively with many prominent men and influential Mughal nobles belonging to different walks of life, and made every effort to propagate his views among them. His correspondents included Khan-i-Khanan, Sikandar Khan Lodi, Mahabat Khan, Khan-i-Azam, Murtazza Khan, Shaikh Farid Bukhari, Khan-i-Jahan, Qilich Khan, Sadr Jahan, Lala Beg, and about five hundred eminent men. He sent his missionaries to every city and province and saw that they discharged their duties efficiently.

Shaikh Ahmad held the conviction that "he had been created not merely to show the right way and to consummate truth, but for some other purpose, under some other plan". He spoke of having passed through the stations of Abu Bakr and Umar and risen above them. He asserted that "he was the opener of the gates of sainthood (*waliyat*), "the last of the chiefs of mystic hierarchy", the renovator of the religion of Islam in the second millennium, and the promoter of Muhammad's station to that of the friend of God (Khalil). His extraordinary claims attracted the notice of Muslim Ulama who complained to Jahangir. The Emperor held an investigation and trial, and condemned him to imprisonment in the fort of Gwalior, where dangerous political offenders were incarcerated. Later on, Jahangir relented and, after keeping him under watch with his army, released him.

But despite the action taken against him, Shaikh Ahmad's mission spread under the lax rule of Jahangir and Shah Jahan. His son Muhammad Masum undertook vigorous propaganda, and it is said that Aurangzeb, who was then the governor of Multan, attended his lectures. Masum, on the eve of his pilgrimage to Mecca, predicted

that in the struggle for the throne Aurangzeb would be victorious. He addressed a letter to Aurangzeb when he was appointed to lead the imperial forces against Balkh, in which he expatiated upon the virtues of holy war (Jihad). Said he, "if we *Dervishes* who have retired from the world, practise austerities and keep long fasts even then we will not reach the hindmost limits of the rewards of *Jihad*".[1] For "a prayer repeated in the mosque of the Prophet brings a ten thousand-fold reward, that in the mosque at Mecca a hundred thousandfold, and the prayer pronounced on the battlefield of *Jihad* two millionfold".[2]

Muhammad Masum's son, Shaikh Saif-ud-Din (born 1049 A.H., A.D. 1639-40), was adopted by Aurangzeb as his preceptor and guide. Under his influence, Shaikh Ahmad Sarhindi's ideas were translated into action. They had no little share in the downfall of the Mughal empire. But according to the apologists of Ahmad Sarhindi, although the empire was lost, religion was saved—a proposition difficult to prove or refute. In any case, the immediate effect was that India was given over to internal strife, exposed to external invasions and plunged in anarchy. Within a century of Aurangzeb's death, India had passed under foreign rule which lasted for nearly two hundred years, and when independence was at last restored, the country was partitioned into two states.

The movement initiated by Akbar reached its culmination in Dara Shukoh. But it failed to capture the Muslim mind. The ideas of Akbar were far too much in advance of the opinion of the times. They produced a reaction of which Shaikh Ahmad Sarhindi was the strongest exponent. Aurangzeb followed him. But his measures failed to produce any reform in the lives of the Muslims. The aristocracy sank in even greater luxury and inertia, and the common people including peasants, artisans and traders were ground down by excessive state demands. The army was demoralised, its commanders became venal and corrupt. A crowd of hypocritical theologians multiplied and among them the most eminent was Shaikh Saif-ud-Din, grandson of Shaikh Ahmad, whose pomp and show rivalled that of the kings. The bonds of society were relaxed, tribalism and sectarianism were accentuated, and loyalty towards the State weakened. Discussing the reasons for this sad state of affairs, a Muslim writer says: "Enthusiasm for law (*shara*) and jurisprudence (*fiqh*) cannot

[1] Muhammad Mian, *Ulama-i-Hind ka Shandar Mazi*, Vol I, p 340
[2] *Ibid*

provide a remedy for inner ills, for they are concerned with the externalia of conduct (what business has the censor inside the house?). They aim at the preservation of the customs and practices of Islam—prevention of gambling, termination of drinking, imposition of Jazia, prohibition of building new temples, punishment of major and minor sins. Jurists attach importance to these matters, but they cannot provide a cure for spiritual and moral shortcomings, as these are beyond the orbit of their authority".[1]

Between the death of Shaikh Ahmad in 1625 and that of Aurangzeb in 1707, the complete failure of the two schools was amply demonstrated. After Aurangzeb conditions in India moved rapidly towards chaos. It was in the atmosphere of thickening gloom and growing desolation that the founder of the third school of Islamic thought flourished. His name was Shah Waliullah. He was born in Delhi in 1703 (1114 A.H.) and died in 1763 (1176 A.H.). He was confronted with some of the knottiest problems of society and State, of religion, ethics and politics. Division and dissension were the order of the day. There was conflict between the scholastics who took their stand on doctrine and ritual, and the esoteric thinkers who looked upon inner discipline as the essence of religion; between the legists and the traditionists; between the jurists of the four schools, between Shiites and Sunnites. There were differences of approach too. Some believed in blindly following authority (*taqlid*). Others found a wide field for interpretation (*ijtihad*). Some condemned the use of Greek philosophy in explaining dogmas of faith, others approved the application of reasoning and logic to understand them. Besides, there were differences regarding questions of ethics and politics, questions about the causes of the decline of the empire and the decay of morals.

Waliullah approached all these problems from a point of view which was original. He desired to strike at the root of differences, to transcend antipathies and to harmonise the antagonistic points of view. In theological questions, he maintained that argument and proof should not be ruled out, because God is the All-Knower (*Alim*) and All-Wise (*Hakim*). All of his actions are necessarily rational and it is man's duty to discover them by reason. God's revelations through His Prophets are an aid in understanding His will. "The Quran has no desire to convince anyone except through clear reason." He held that the way of law (Shariat) and the mystic way (Tariqat) were not

[1] Shaikh Muhammad Ikram, *Rudi Kauther* (Urdu), Mercantile Press, Lahore, p. 309

two opposite creeds but two fruits of the same tree, and he endeavoured to end the controversy between the followers of philosophies of the substantial and the attributive unity of God by laying emphasis upon their common features. Similarly, he attempted to find an underlying unity among the four schools of jurisprudence by tracing their roots in the *Mawatta* of Malik.

One of the main factors in the internecine wars of the eighteenth century was the quarrel between Sunni nobles of Turani descent and Shias of Irani extraction. Shah Waliullah wrote a treatise, *Izalatul Khifa*, in which he described the lives, achievements and virtues of the four Khalifas in such a way as to reconcile both sides.

But nothing shows more convincingly his desire to appeal to the reason of the individual and to free him from the leading strings of the Ulama than his translation of the Quran into Persian—an act of Lutheran audacity which recognised the individual's right to apply his own mind to the understanding of the sacred texts.

In the sphere of politics, he was probably the only Muslim thinker who had a clear insight into the intimate relations between ethics, politics and economics. According to him, ethics has two aspects—private or individual, and public or social; but the latter has much greater value than the former. In social morality, he assigns the highest place to justice, which manifests itself in our personal behaviour as politeness, courtesy, civility; in our financial transactions as economy; in collective life as civil liberty; in politics as order; and when this virtue is made the basis of brotherhood, mutual affection and fellowship, then it is called social good. When men behave justly they create a righteous society, which is in accord with the divine wishes.

Waliullah's conception of justice invites comparison with that of Plato in its comprehensiveness and depth. The processes of thought by which they arrived at the idea were, however, different.

This righteous society is corrupted when wealth increases and the satisfaction of appetites becomes the end of life, when vanity and pride possess the rich, and the satisfaction of the craving for luxury and dissipation become the main object of life. This inevitably leads to the adoption of measures to increase income by oppressing the weak and sucking the blood of the peasants, traders and artisans. The economy of the land is thus turned into wrong channels, emphasis is placed upon the production of luxury goods, and the labouring

classes are impoverished. The treasury of the State is eventually drained by the increase of demands of the idle dependants who grow in numbers but perform no useful function.

His remedy for this state of affairs was "the abolition of the entire system (*fakki kulli nizam*)", the restoration of justice in human affairs and the re-establishment of harmony.

Waliullah's philosophy contained valuable elements of thought which, if properly developed, could have helped in the solution of the tangled problems of Indian life, but unfortunately the times were adverse and the philosopher's resources inadequate. The instruments on which he wanted to rely for bringing about reform were either incapable or unworthy. He appealed to Najib-ud-Daulah, Nizam-ul-Mulk and Ahmad Shah Abdali—all three upholders of the condemned system—to intervene and restore the pristine glory of Islam. He failed to realise the hopeless inadequacy of his chosen champions. It is amazing that he should have placed his trust in Ahmad Shah Abdali, who had ravaged the fairest provinces of the Mughal empire, had plundered the Hindu and the Muslim without the slightest compunction and, above all, who was an upstart without any roots among his own people. It was strange that he should imagine that only that justice which transcended the boundaries of creeds and communities, gathered all elements of Indian society into a harmonious whole and treated all Indians as equals, could generate the force which would create and sustain a society such as he dreamed of. Nor did he understand the significance of the happenings in Bengal which were completely changing the basis of politics in India.

His son, Shah Abdul Aziz (1746-1823), who was a witness to the British occupation of Delhi in 1803, did discover that the foundations of Islam had indeed been destroyed because liberty of conscience and opinion and civil liberty had been denied, and India had, therefore, been converted into Dar-al-Harb (land of war). Yet neither the father nor the son understood the real significance of the change; neither realised that the new danger could not be met with old weapons, and that no one community could uplift itself in isolation and leave the others enslaved, sore and discontented.

Hindu thought

The age of original thinking and intellectual reconstruction among the Hindus seems to have closed with the fall of the

Vijayanagar empire in the Deccan. The movement of thought which had started with the Upanishads in the ancient times and which had been reinforced by the speculations of Shankara, Ramanuja, Madhwa, and Nimbarka in the Middle Ages, ended with Vallabha, the last of the great Acharyas (teachers). In the words of Radhakrishnan, "the philosophers, or rather writers on philosophy of this period of decadence, profess to be votaries of truth, though they understand by it merely the pious sophistries or the sacrosanct hair-splittings of this or that school of dogmatics. These professional dialecticians imagine that the small brook by their side, trickling away in the sand or evaporating in the fog, is the broad river of Indian philosophy".[1]

Ramanuja, Ramananda and Vallabha supplied the philosophical foundations for the cult of *bhakti* which was becoming popular all over India. The doctrine which Vallabha enunciated is known as the *pushtimarga* It lays emphasis upon love and attachment to God whose grace alone can lead to the experience of the divine. Vallabha had no successors who attained eminence in philosophic learning. But his ideas inspired a whole school of devotees who used the popular dialects to sing songs of divine love and grace.

Another formative influence in the creation and development of *bhakti* was the revival of the popularity of the Bhagavata Purana. The older Acharyas had confined their attention to the three ancient texts (*prasthana trayi*), the Upanishads, the Brahma Sutras, and the Bhagavadgita. But Vallabha and others added the Bhagavata to these three texts on which commentaries began to be composed.

These currents of thought and sentiment found expression in the immortal verses of Surdas and Tulasidas. They were influenced by the philosophies of the various sects but they rose above sectarian dissensions, narrownesses and limitations. In the sixteenth century the modern Indian languages of the north became the vehicle of creative expression replacing Sanskrit.

The Dharma Shastra was studied extensively. But after the days of Vachaspati Misra (sixteenth century), Jimutavahana (the author of *Dharmaratna* containing the famous Dayabhaga), Raghunandan, Kamalakara and Mitra Misra, no commentary of importance was produced. Balakrishna Panjagunda's *Balam Bhatti* was written in the eighteenth century and achieved recognition as a commentary on

[1]Radhakrishnan, S., *Indian Philosophy*, Vol. II (London, 1931), pp. 771-72

Mitakshara. Jagan Natha Tarka Panchanana helped Warren Hastings in the preparation of the treatise on Hindu law.

Nyaya and other systems of philosophy were also taught, but no significant development took place in them. Astronomy and mathematics received some attention, especially for framing horoscopes, determining auspicious days and fixing festivals. The ancient system of medicine continued to be studied, without advance in anatomy or physiology.

On the whole, the judgement of Keith regarding later Sanskrit literature is apposite. He points out that the writers "were bound to follow authority, and they fail to evolve any independence of attitude to that authority, or to do more than exhibit very considerable ability in reconciling the irreconcilable, and establishing the legitimacy of a custom of their district by torturing ancient texts which obviously meant something else".[1]

Education

The vital defect of both Hindu and Muslim cultures was their old and unprogressive educational system. The Hindus and the Muslims were equally backward educationally. Neither of them had the faintest glimmering of the progress the sciences had made in the West; nor did they know anything of the new methods of observation, experiment and criticism. It is amazing that although Akbar received at his court many European missionaries and for years discussed with them their religion and theology, he showed no interest in European philosophy, science or technology. Shivaji had a two hours' interview with Manucci in the camp of Jai Singh, but it seemed to have aroused no curiosity in him regarding the culture which the Italian represented. The Europeans dominated the seas round India and made landing stations and factories both on the western and eastern coasts, but the Indians of Gujarat, Konkan, Kerala, Cholamandal, Orissa and Bengal remained intellectually wholly unaffected by their presence. The princes and noblemen of the various courts showed some interest in European animals and birds, mirrors, toys, wines and spirits, but none whatever in their social, economic or cultural affairs.

This is surprising, more so when one recalls that long before Europe had emerged from the darkness of the Middle Ages, Hindu India had made considerable advances in the sciences. They had

[1] Keith, A. B., *A History of Sanskrit Literature*, p. 449

developed in the mathematical field—arithmetic, algebra, geometry, trigonometry and even the infinitesimal calculus. They had evolved the highly abstract concepts of zero and infinity and reached scientific notions approximating modern standards. Among other sciences, they had cultivated astronomy, medicine and surgery, rudiments of natural philosophy, botany and zoology. Their conclusions had been reached by the processes of enquiry, observation, experiment, dissection and generally the correlation of cause and effect.

The Muslims too had made large strides in the development of scientific knowledge. They had studied Indian and Greek works in Arabic translations, and had made creditable contributions to the advancement of knowledge. In fact, in many sciences they had advanced considerably beyond the Hindus, for example, in mathematics—algebra, geometry, spherical trigonometry and logarithms; in astronomy in the formation of tables, making of instruments like the astrolabe and the armillary sphere and building observatories; in chemistry in the knowledge of the composition of acids (sulphuric, nitric and aqua-regia), preparation of salts and separation of arsenic and antimony from their sulphides; and in some branches of medicine. They had accumulated considerable information concerning the geography of the world. History was specially cultivated by them. In fact, they were the first teachers of Europe in the sciences. Their schools trained Christian students from the different countries of Europe, and translations of their Arabic treatises into Latin formed the basis of European studies.

Yet, although almost every branch of knowledge of the Muslims was studied in the Christian universities of Spain, Italy and France and assimilated into the cultural heritage of Europe, the new discoveries of Europe from the fifteenth century onwards remained almost entirely unknown in India till the end of the eighteenth century.

This neglect was not because of lack of schools. In fact, there was an abundance of them. Adam, in his reports on the state of education in Bengal and Bihar (1835 and 1838), estimated that for nearly one hundred and fifty thousand villages there were about one hundred thousand elementary schools.[1] On the basis of population, he calculated that there was a school for every four hundred persons. So far as

[1] Adam, W., *Reports on the State of Education in Bengal* (edited by A. Basu, 1941), pp. 6-7

education of the higher grade was concerned there were on the average about a hundred schools in each district of Bengal. Altogether there were eighteen hundred such schools in the province. In the Madras territories there were 12,500 educational institutions maintained by the princes or by the people.[1]

The real trouble lay in the quality of education. In the first place, education was organised on a communal basis. There were in fact two altogether different systems—one exclusively for the Hindus with the regional language as the medium of instruction at the elementary stage, and Sanskrit for higher learning; the other for the Muslims and those Hindus who desired government employment. The medium of instruction in these schools was Persian.

The Hindu schools were divided into two water-tight compartments. One section consisted of institutions imparting elementary knowledge. These schools catered for the needs of those pupils who would follow agricultural and commercial pursuits. Naturally the pupils belonged to almost every caste in the district. For example, fifty castes and sub-castes were represented in the elementary schools of Murshidabad (city and district). Of the 998 scholars, 181 were Brahmanas, 129 Kayasthas and the rest distributed over the other castes. There were eighty-two Musalman scholars also.

In south Bihar, the 2,918 Hindu pupils belonged to forty-eight different castes. The largest number hailed from the Gandhbanik, Magadh and Teli castes, the Brahmanas and Kayasthas came next, and then Rajputs, Kahars and others. The number of Musalman students was 172.

But the teachers in these schools largely belonged to the writer castes. In Murshidabad, of sixty-seven teachers in the same number of schools, thirty-nine were Kayasthas, fourteen Brahmanas, and fourteen members of other castes. In south Bihar there were 285 schools and the same number of teachers; of these 278 were Kayasthas and seven came from other castes; none belonged to the Brahmana caste.

The pupils of the elementary schools spent from five to ten years in completing their course, which included elements of reading, writing and arithmetic. Writing occupied a great deal of time, starting with tracing letters with fingers on sand spread on the floor, then using palm leaf, reed pen and charcoal ink, and going on to plantain

[1] *Ibid*, Introduction, p. lxv

leaf and ultimately to paper. The aim was to learn letter-writing and composing business correspondence—petitions, grants, leases, etc. In arithmetic the main object was to acquire proficiency in accounting, either agricultural or commercial. The emphasis was on tables—numerical, multiplication, weights, measures and fractional. Reading was confined to the perusal of books like the Ramayana in the regional language.

Education was purely utilitarian and extremely narrow. It did not awaken the mind, and did not free it from the trammels of tradition. Adam's criticism is that "the hand, the eye, and the ear are employed; the memory is a good deal exercised; the judgement is not wholly neglected, and the religious sentiment is early and perseveringly cherished, however misdirected. But the passions and affections are allowed to grow up wild without any thought of pruning their luxuriances or directing their exercise to good purposes".[1]

The condition of the higher schools of learning was even worse. The students and teachers of these schools were almost wholly drawn from the Brahmana caste, because their courses were predominantly theological with some ancillary subjects added to them. For instance, in Murshidabad there were twenty-four such schools with twenty-four masters and one hundred and fifty-three scholars. All the masters were Brahmanas, and excepting one Kayastha student all others were Brahmana. In south Bihar the twenty-seven schools had twenty-seven masters—all Brahmana. None among the four hundred and thirty-seven students belonged to any non-Brahmana caste.

In Bengal and Bihar three main types of courses were taught—(i) grammar and general literature, (ii) law, and (iii) logic. There were besides a few schools for philosophy (Darshana and Vedanta), the Puranas, the Tantras, astronomy and medicine. It was estimated that "amongst one hundred thousand Brahmans, there may be one thousand who learn the grammar of the Sunskritu, of whom four or five hundred may read some parts of the *kavyu* (or poetical literature), and fifty some parts of *ulunkaru* (or rhetorical) shastras. Four hundred of this thousand may read some of the *smriti* (or law works); but not more than ten any part of the *tuntrus* (or the mystical and magical treatises of modern Hinduism). Three hundred may study *nyayu* (or logic), but only five or six the *meemangsu* (explanatory of the ritual of the veds), the *sunkhyu* (a system of philosophical

[1] Adam, W, *Report on Education, op cit*, p. 147

materialism), the *vedantu* (illustrative of the spiritual portions of the veds), *patunjulu* (a system of philosophical asceticism), the *vaisheshika* (a system of philosophical anti-materialism), or the *veda* (the most ancient and sacred writings of Hindoos). Ten persons in this number of Brahmans may become learned in the astronomical shastras, while ten more understand these very imperfectly. Fifty of this thousand may read the *shree bhaguvutu* and some of the *pooranus*."[1]

The studies extended from two to twelve and even twenty-two years. The schools consisted of a teacher and a number of pupils attached to him. The numbers on the average were six pupils to one teacher. The classes were taken in the house of the teacher and the routine commenced in the early morning and continued, with a short interval at midday, till late in the evening.

The preliminary course in all subjects consisted in the learning of Sanskrit. In the course on general literature the greatest stress was laid upon grammar, rhetoric and lexicology—Panini's *Kaumudi* and *Amarakosha*. In literature a beginning was made with *Bhatti Kavya* and then *Raghuvamsha* and other Kavyas were taken up.

The students of law devoted eight to twenty-three years in mastering the various branches of Hindu law and rites. In Bengal, the treatises *Raghunandan* and *Jimutavahana* were studied, while *Manu* and *Mitakshara* were taught in other schools.

The study of logic required twelve to twenty-two years. Starting from definitions of terms, qualities and objects, it included propositions, syllogism, inference and deduction, fallacies and proofs of divine existence.

In medicine and astronomy—the only two sciences taught—the studies were based on the ancient texts and their commentaries.

Obviously such prolonged pre-occupation with and detailed specialisation in one branch of knowledge while rendering the intellect keen and subtle tended to extreme narrowness. Again the disciplines of grammar, law and logic were largely formal and verbal. Their effect was to turn attention away from objective reality. In the words of Adam, these studies made the scholars "adepts in the subtleties of the profoundest grammar, familiar with all the varieties and applications of their national laws and literature; and indulging in the abstrusest and most interesting disquisitions in logical and

[1] *Ibid*, p 19

ethical philosophy".[1] But they kept the mind asleep, leading "a dreamy sort of existence in separating, combining, and recasting in various forms, the fables and speculations of past ages".[2]

The Islamic education system was not very much better. It was intended only for the upper classes. It did not offer any instruction to the Muslim masses. In this system there were no schools comparable with the Hindu elementary schools using the mother-tongue for teaching. In all Muslim schools Persian was the medium of instruction; neither Urdu nor any other Indian spoken language was used. The Muslim masses were, therefore, steeped in greater ignorance than the Hindu.

There were three types of instruction for the Muslims. The first type, namely, the memorising of the verses of the Quran without understanding the meaning was in the hands of Mullas who had the lowest degree of attainment in knowledge. Adam characterises their teaching as a "consummate burlesque".[3] It was insignificant and useless.

The second type was given in Persian schools. It concerned itself mainly with literature, with grammar, computation and arithmetic thrown in. In poetry Firdausi, Sadi, Hafiz, Urfi, Jami, Khaqani, etc.; in prose, *Gulistan*, *Waqai Nimat Khan Ali*, *Bahar-i-Danish*, etc.; in epistolary art Abul Fazl, Alamgir, Madho Ram Brahman, etc.; in grammar and rhetoric, *Hadiqat-ul-Balaghat*, *Dastur-ul-Mubtadi*, etc., were taught. Rules of arithmetic and geometry were included in the course.

Persian study led on to Arabic which gave finishing touches to scholarship. The courses in Arabic started with a thorough grounding in grammar including etymology, inflection, syntax and prosody. The mastery of language led to higher studies. The advanced courses were divided into two groups—Manqulat (traditional) and Maqulat (rational). The first group consisted of Akhbar and Hadith (history and tradition), Tafsir (exegesis), Adab (literature) and Fiqh (law). The second group included logic (Mantiq), philosophy (Hikmat), medicine (Tib), mathematics and astronomy (Riyazi and Haiat).

Language and literature provided the foundation for the sciences and, therefore, a great deal of stress was laid upon grammar (Sarf-o-

[1] *Ibid* p. 170
[2] *Ibid*. p. 276
[3] *Ibid*. p. 152

nahv) and on prescribed texts in prose and poetry. Selections from the six collections of Hadith (or the Sayings), Fiqh (Muslim law) and Usul-i-Fiqh (principles of Muslim jurisprudence) were widely studied. For exegesis portions of the commentaries, Jalalain and Baidawi, sufficed. Logic was based on the treatises of Aristotle, and philosophy was a combination of Greek and Muslim ideas. Medicine, mathematics and astronomy were based on Hindu and Greek sciences. But the teaching of the rational sciences, including medicine and astronomy, was wholly bookish; laboratories and observatories were not available and the experimental method was not employed in study. The main emphasis was upon theology and law and the authority of the great teachers of the past was held in unquestioned esteem.

The Muslim mind was soaked in medievalism and it was intellectually quite unprepared to withstand the attack from the West. Strangely enough, the most devastating commentary on this system of education comes from Aurangzeb, who, pestered by his tutor Mulla Saleh for preferment, gave him a bit of his mind in regard to his services as a teacher. Bernier has given a complete report of the speech.

Aurangzeb asked Mulla Saleh "but what was the knowledge I derived under your tuition ?" and complained, "was it not incumbent upon my preceptor to make me acquainted with the distinguishing features of every nation of the earth; its resources and strength, its mode of warfare; its manners, religion, form of government, and wherein its interests principally consist; and by a regular course of historical reading, to render familiar with the origin of States, their progress and decline; the events, accidents, or errors, owing to which such great changes and mighty revolutions, have been effected ?" He adds, "a familiarity with the languages of surrounding nations may be indispensable in a King, but you would teach me to read and write (only) *Arabic*. . . .Forgetting how many important subjects ought to be embraced in the education of a Prince, you acted as if it were chiefly necessary that he should possess great skill in grammar, and such knowledge as belongs to a Doctor of Law". He proceeds, "can we repeat our prayers, or acquire a knowledge of law and of the sciences, only through the medium of *Arabic*? . . . .I have a perfect remembrance of your having, during several years, harassed my brain with idle and foolish propositions, the solution of which yield no satisfaction to the mind—propositions that seldom enter into the

business of life. . . . When I left you, I could boast of no greater attainment in the science than the use of many obscure and uncouth terms, calculated to discourage, confound, and appal a youth of the most masculine understanding. . . . If you had taught me that philosophy which adapts the mind to reason, and will not suffer it to rest satisfied with anything short of the most solid arguments, if you had made me acquainted with the nature of man, accustomed me always to refer to first principles, and given me a sublime and adequate conception of the universe, and of the order and regular motion of its parts. . . . I should be more indebted to you than Alexander was to Aristotle."[1]

Bernier's account of the education imparted by the Pandits at Banaras is equally revealing. He found in this Athens of India, the same system of instruction as obtained in ancient Greece. The masters took classes in their own houses and in the gardens of the suburbs. Each master had four to fifteen pupils who remained with him from ten to twelve years. The atmosphere was one of pure study and the students lived an abstemious life.

The courses taught were Sanskrit, the Puranas, Darshanas (six systems of philosophy), medicine, astronomy, and geography. Regarding medicine Bernier's criticism was that although the methods of treatment of disease worked, the doctors understood nothing of anatomy, for "they never open the body either of men or beasts". Regarding astronomy, they had the tables according to which eclipses could be forecast with great accuracy, but their theories of the eclipses were ridiculous, and their notions about the moon's distance from the earth and its luminosity absurd. Again in geography their belief was that the world was flat and triangular, and was divided into seven regions each surrounded by its own peculiar sea—of milk, sugar, butter, wine, etc."[2]

These wholly fantastic notions had little relation with reality. Those who entertained them had no chance in competing against those who were making themselves conversant with nature and obtaining mastery over its forces.

Art, architecture and literature

The eighteenth century Indian mind is best studied in its expression in art and literature. They testify that an indescribable malaise

[1] Bernier, F., *Travels*, *op. cit.*, pp. 155-160
[2] *Ibid* pp 334-40

had settled upon the spirit of India, that a moral and intellectual canker was sapping its vitality. What appears like a sudden fall in the potential of moral and mental energy made itself manifest in the realm of practical politics, and in the conduct of the leading figures of the century. Aurangzeb had recognised the malady and had attempted to find a cure, but the remedy proved worse than the disease.

The arts, especially architecture, provide eloquent examples of the deterioration of conditions. Vincent Smith points out that "the long and unhappy reign of Aurangzeb Alamgir (1659-1707) was marked by a rapid decline in art, including architecture".[1] One of the reasons why decline set in was the close relation which existed between the State and the arts. The chief patron of the arts was the monarch and his tastes, inclinations, and ideals were a powerful factor in the determination of the styles of art.

Akbar was a visionary who dreamed of universal peace and harmony. The dream incarnated itself in the "wondrous city" of Fatehpur Sikri. In the words of Abul Fazl, "His Majesty plans splendid edifices, and dresses the work of his mind and heart in the garments of stone and clay".[2] The abandonment of Fatehpur Sikri was symbolic of the evanescence of the dream.

Jahangir was a refined sybarite and a sensuous voluptuary. His aestheticism inspired the painters of his court who rivalled the greatest artists of the age. The mausoleum of Itimad-ud-Daulah built by his queen Nur Jahan, in the richness of its ornamentation and the softness of its lines, is an exquisite specimen of the tastes of his court.

Shah Jahan loved grandeur. His romantic lyricism found the most adequate expression in the Taj Mahal—a monument to love that is ever-abiding.

The dethronement of Shah Jahan marked the end of an epoch. Aurangzeb was a cold, calculating fanatic. Under the searing frost of his religious zeal, the fountains of art dried up. About the tomb of Rabia Daurani built in Aurangabad in 1678, Percy Brown notices "the absence of that combination of spiritual and human incentive.... which had stimulated the Mughal workmen".[3] The Badshahi mosque at Lahore shows "that which is essential to its (architecture's) nature

[1] Smith, V. A., *A History of Fine Art in India and Ceylon* (second edition, Oxford, 1930), p. 186

[2] Abul Fazl, *Ain-i-Akbari* (translated by Blochmann, Calcutta, 1927), p 232

[3] Brown, Percy, *Indian Architecture: The Islamic Period*, p 120

has gone out of it, the sap is drying up and it is becoming stiff and soulless".[1]

After Aurangzeb the Mughal emperors ceased to build great monuments. Their mantle fell upon provincial rulers. Among them the Nawabs of Oudh were prominent. But the edifices which they erected evoked from Vincent Smith the judgement, that "the buildings in Persian style of Aurangzeb's age, being merely examples of growing deterioration, are not worth detailed study or illustration. The tomb of Nawab Safdarjang of Oudh near Delhi (1756), a passable copy of the mausoleum of Humayun, is marred by wretched plaster decoration in the interior. The shoddy buildings of the Nawab Vazirs at Lucknow are pretentious abominations".[2] Percy Brown characterises the great Imambara as a work of "outward show and tawdry pretence", whose "style has no spiritual values".[3]

The other arts corroborate the testimony of architecture. Babar and Humayun under whom painting was introduced and developed at the court of Delhi were men who had suffered the buffetings of fortune and after years of adversity, disaster and adventure, achieved victory and empire The art which they fostered reflected their spirit. Sieges, battles, hunts, erecting of edifices and laying of gardens—scenes of bold adventure and creative activity adorned the canvasses prepared under their patronage. Akbar who regarded painting as a means of realising God's providence, gave a great impetus to this high spirited style, and encouraged the Indianising of the methods, themes and treatment of painting. Under Jahangir, who was a connoisseur of rare insight, the art reached perfection. Although Shah Jahan's affections were centred upon architecture, painting continued to flourish at his court. After him the zealotry of Aurangzeb and the misfortunes and the feeblenesses of his successors had an adverse effect upon the art. It lost its virility, suppleness, assurance and joyous abandon. Its line and colour deteriorated; effeminacy, meretricious showiness, escapist dalliance, and shallow sentimentality characterised it. Only in the small states, which were situated at a distance from the central regions of the empire and which stood outside the ambit of the foreign invader's tempestuous campaigns, did

[1] *Ibid* p. 121
[2] Smith, V. A., *A History of Fine Arts in India and Ceylon*, *op. cit.*, p. 186
[3] Brown, Percy, *Indian Architecture: The Islamic Period*, p. 123

painting continue to retain some of its vitality and vigour during the eighteenth century.

Literature is the mirror of life. It reflects the changing moods of society. Like the other arts it expresses the yearnings and aspirations, the hopes and fears, the lights and shadows of the human mind. Yet literature differs from the other arts, for it has the power to create beauty in the most untoward and unseemly conditions. The major arts in India depended upon the patronage of the courts. When they flourished, architecture, sculpture, painting and music responded to their impulse; otherwise they languished. The Mughal rulers lavished their large resources on forts, mosques, mausoleums and palaces and have left behind sublime monuments of grace and magnificence. They showered favours upon the painters attached to their *karkhanas* who created a world of beauty unsurpassed in the plasticity of line and harmony of colour. The enlightened beneficence of the kings and princes supported the schools of music of Delhi, Gwalior and Agra where Amir Khusrau, Tansen, Baiju and others discovered new modes and new melodies (Ragas and Raginis), and invented new instruments (Sitar).

But when this patronage began to fail as a result of growing anarchy and contracting exchequers, a gloom fell upon the arts and the eighteenth century registered a marked decline. But it was not exactly the same in the field of literature, for poetry is intensely personal as experience and expression. Poetic genius is apparently independent of outer circumstances. In the dark night which began to engulf the India of Aurangzeb with tropical rapidity the brilliance of the literary stars illumined the sky in all quarters. All Indian languages exhibited the phenomenon of decadence relieved by literary genius.

This may be best illustrated from the history of Hindi and Urdu literatures. The middle of the seventeenth century formed some sort of a literary watershed in the development of the two. During the first period art was pursued for the sake of life, during the second art was practised for the sake of art. The sublime poetry embodying the yearnings of men for higher life, the aspiration for the vision of the ineffable reality, the passion for unity with the divine, the experiences of sorrow and joy felt by the pilgrim on the journey towards his ultimate goal, as also the elevated verse which sang of heroic adventure, high endeavour, and lofty achievement of great ideals, of

romance, love and devotion, belong to the two and a half centuries preceding the middle of the seventeenth century.

In Hindi the three schools of *bhakti* inspired poetry of the highest order. Their leaders were Kabir, Surdas and Tulasidas. Along with them were the allegorical romancers like Malik Muhammad Jayasi who employed the verse form of *doha* and *chaupai*—later followed in the composition of *Ramacharitamanas*.

Then followed the epoch of what is known as the *riti* (erotic) school of poetry. It is difficult to say why the genius of poetry took this turning at this juncture. All that can be said is that both art and literature abandoned the old healthy lines and proceeded along the downward path with steps which show weariness, irresponsibility, and levity. The poets who were attached to the courts indulged the frivolities and superficialities of their patrons. They were witnesses to the intrigues, ribaldry, and debauchery of the princes and their courtiers and their poetry pandered to their masters' passions. For them woman was a doll to play with, a means for the satisfaction of man's sensuality. She was not a person possessing an individuality of her own; hence she was not the object of true love to be wooed with ardour, to be approached with an attitude of esteem and respect, to be won by sacrifice and hazardous striving. The woman of the poets was a fairy princess living in a royal palace, surrounded by enervating luxuries, swathed in silk, gold and velvet and adorned with jewels and precious stones.

The writers lived in a social *milieu* in which enthusiasm had changed into cynicism, ideals had lost their attraction, piety was replaced by hypocrisy, and egotism and self-indulgence had established their supremacy. Neither profundity of thought nor tension of feeling, but a floating on the surface of life's current regardless of its direction, were the distinguishing marks of the mind. Men sought pleasure and relaxation, not sweat and toil, not reform or progress.

Poetry derived not from life but from tradition and books. It borrowed thoughts, similes, metaphors, and themes from the ancient Sanskrit texts of the Kama Shastra (sexology), Nayika Nayaka bheda (characteristics of heroes and heroines) and Alankar (rhetoric).

Yet, in this poetry there was one relieving virtue—it was word perfect. Harmonious sounds, apt and homely metaphors, and moving

rhythms endow these creations with an unusual appeal. Much that is repugnant is clothed in attractive rainbow colours. For some of its charm it was indebted to Persian and Urdu literature—for the intensity of passion, the variety of moods, lyricism, rhetoric and vocabulary.

From Chintamani Tripathi, who wrote *Kavikul Kalpadruma* in 1650, started the movement and till the beginning of the nineteenth century numerous poets contributed to its growth. Among them Matiram, Dev, Raslin, Das and Padmakar were the most eminent.

Literature in Urdu follows a parallel course. The language was evolved in the region round Delhi, but the first home of its literature was the Deccan. Sufi saints who were interested in propagating the message of Islam were pioneers of Urdu literature. Soon the fashion for versification spread among the educated and a number of poets arose who refined the language and enriched it with their works. The language of the early poetry was racy, of the soil; the spoken languag was close to its Prakrit origin. Its subjects were taken from life and their treatment was natural and full of robust vigour—didactic religion, allegorical stories of the mystic journey, heroic odes and epics, romance, love and adventure.

Then the Deccan was invaded by the Mughals and ultimately the rule of the Bahmani Sultans was extinguished. Deprived of patronage, the poets began to migrate to the north. They reached Delhi when the sun of the Mughal empire was setting. But in spite of the general demoralisation the plant of Urdu poetry grew lustily in its native soil. During the eighteenth century Urdu spread to all corners of India and Urdu literary circles were established in every province of India. When the British dominion extended over northern India, Urdu was the *lingua franca*, employed by the polite society—Muslim and Hindu —as the medium of culture and social intercourse.

But the literature which was produced in these degenerate times suffered from all the ills society was heir to. Its poetry was dilettantish, weighed with euphuism and conceit. Its spirit was shackled by artificial limitations of rhyme, and its mood alternated between the sensuous and the spiritual, neither deeply experienced. Clouds of pessimism and despair hung over it. It sought rest in flight from reality. Like the contemporary Hindi poets, however, the Urdu writers showed a surpassing skill in their diction and made the Urdu language a wonderfully pliant instrument of expression. Among the

stars who shone with unusual brilliance were Mir, Sauda, Momin, and Ghalib.

But the Hindi and Urdu poets of this epoch were virtuosos who spent all their skill in cutting and polishing the rough nuggets of words, and like jewellers in matching their hues and harmonising their brilliance for the garlands which they wore. They were so absorbed in their pursuit that they almost lost the awareness of the meaning of life and of the higher purpose of literature.

What is true of Hindi and Urdu applies to the other northern and southern languages of India. It is remarkable how behind the diversities of language, race and creed, a deep cultural unity pervaded the whole of India. In each of the two periods in which the literary history of medieval India may be divided there is a similarity of outlook on the world, of approach to human problems, of subject matter, and of treatment.

In the first period, the Ramayana, the Mahabharata and the Puranas were a treasure-house which was ransacked for themes, and the Upanishads, the Bhagvdgita and the Bhagavata supplied the source and spring of life's philosophy. In all languages these were reproduced in the form of translation or adaptation. Tulasidas in Hindi, Krittivas Ojha in Bengali, Kamban in Tamil, Bhaskara in Telugu, Eluttacan in Malayalam, Mukteshwar in Marathi, Girdhar in Gujarati, Madhava Kandali in Assamese, Balaram in Oriya, either rendered Valmiki's Ramayana in the local idiom or produced the story with such modifications as their imagination and faith dictated. Then there were Ramayanas in Urdu as well as Persian. The Mahabharata and the Puranas inspired the poets of all these languages either to translate them in extenso or to produce portions of them.

The Upanishads, the Bhagvadgita and the Bhagavata provided directly or indirectly inspiration for good life to millions irrespective of the religion they professed. The Hindus all over India read them in the original Sanskrit or in translation in the regional languages. This was natural. But the Musalmans also had access to them through Sufis who were acquainted with their teachings by contact with Hindu sadhus, and through translations. Faizi had rendered the Gita into Persian verse, Dara Shukoh translated fifty Upanishads in prose, and the Persian version of the tenth chapter of the Bhagavata was done at his instance. Banwalidas Wali translated Krishna Misra's *Prabodha Chandrodaya* into Persian.

The second period exhibits a similar universality of character. Dr. Varadarajan's plaint about Tamil is echoed by historians of all the other languages. Says he, "the literature of this period is full of frigid conceits and pedantic exercises of the grammarians, and the simplicity, the directness and the restraint characteristic of the early literature are now lost. Most of the poets of this age seem imitative and repetitive not only in their narrative but also in their descriptions. Taste in poetry has become sophisticated and poets are judged by the jingle of their alliteration and the acrobatics of their metre. We come across really talented writers capable of original productions but they are only a very few. Even the works of these eminent poets evince a childish delight in riotous imaginations and hyperbolic utterances. There is, in many works of this period, not so much of art as artificiality, and therefore many of these works have fallen into oblivion".[1]

Dr. Sitapati speaking of Telugu literature of these times says, "good poetry vanished and a period of decadence prevailed".[2] According to Shri Adya Rangacharya, "by the middle of the eighteenth century Kannada ceased to exist".[3] In Marathi, Lavanis (erotic poems) became common and even spiritual love and devotion was described in the degraded fashion of carnal amour. Shrimati Deshpande observes, "It was obvious that degeneration had set in. Metaphysical acumen was getting blunt. Devotional urge was on the wane and the verve and vigour of a soldier's life was also getting lost. Literature was settling down to the leisurely luxuriousness and erudite ornateness of the later days of the Peshwas."[4] In Gujarat, according to Trivedi[5], "life was decadent from 1790 until the advent of the British", and even Dayaram's excellence could not redeem it. Of Bengali poetry in the eighteenth century, Dr. S. K. Banerjee's opinion is that it is "a colourless dragging on of the old patterns both in subject matter and form."[6] In Assamese literature "a predominantly secular tone" prevailed and "erotic and panegyrical verses" were composed in this "dull period for the Assamese people."[7] Urdu and Hindi suffered from similar ills.

[1] *Indian Literature*, edited by Dr. Nagendra and others, p. 47
[2] *Ibid* p 96
[3] *Ibid* p 166
[4] *Ibid* p. 252
[5] *Ibid* pp. 231, 334
[6] *Ibid* p. 386
[7] Dr. Barua and Goswami, *Ibid*. p. 439

What was a bright feature in this all-encircling gloom was the appearance of great masters of rhetoric, of style and diction who, however poor in thought, possessed supreme authority over language. They refined and developed the languages in which they wrote, making them instruments fit to meet the demands of the future. They were thus the representatives of an epoch that was passing and the pioneers of the age that was coming. Their literary output furnishes irrefragable evidence of the cultural unity of India. It would have been more impressive if it was not discounted in the sphere of thought by the existence of an unbridgeable gulf between Hindu and Muslim learning, and in the sphere of action by the absence of national consciousness.

CHAPTER SIX

THE BRITISH CONQUEST OF INDIA

Sea-route to India

Vasco da Gama's discovery of the sea-route to India opened a new chapter in the history of the relations between Asia and Europe. The immediate effect of the discovery was the elimination of the Turkish power from the seas washing the shores of East Africa and the Asian lands—Arabia, Persia and India.

But for over two hundred years after the discovery, the maritime activities of the Western peoples remained limited to coastal commerce. They obtained control over the seas. But in the inland regions of Anatolia, Persia and India, the Ottomans, the Safavis, and the Mughals, had reared imposing imperial systems which placed limits on the ambitions of the Western adventurers.

During these two centuries, viz. the sixteenth and the seventeenth, Asia rose to the zenith of its glory. But its very success proved its undoing. It became impossible to change the well-tried ways. Traditions were fixed, and the mind became a prisoner in its own walls. Its economic structure imposed an atomistic character upon society, which confined human fellowship within narrow walls. Inward freedom became reconciled with external authority and prescription. Criticism and dissent were looked upon as sins.

On the other hand, in Europe the breeze of freedom began to blow at the turn of the fifteenth century. It grew in amplitude and strength with the flux of time. The Renaissance rent the chains of the intellect; the Reformation released the mind from the tyranny of the Church; the Commercial and Industrial Revolutions broadened the foundations of society; and political changes ushered into existence national states. Advancement of knowledge gave power over nature. Emergence of new sentiments disclosed new dimensions for human fellowship. Feudal stagnation was swept away. Dynamism entered life and man felt uplifted.

The advance of the Muslim Turks into Christian Europe from the East and the Christian pursuit of the Muslims around Africa were two parallel movements of the fifteenth century which had common world-wide effects. They brought the static societies of the East into violent collision with the progressive states of the West. In

the clash between two social systems in which the intellectual, economic and political potential of the one is higher than that of the other, the flow of energy is determined by the difference in their levels.

Vasco da Gama was a portent of this movement. He was the spearhead of an aggressive Europe. But the country which he represented, namely Portugal, was incapable of sustaining the movement for long, and so it fell out of the race and the lead passed into stronger hands. Holland, France and England became rivals of Portugal and of Spain, and their pressure compelled the two to withdraw from the arena. Then rivalry broke out between the three—Holland, France and England—as they began to compete for the rich prize. Ultimately, England succeeded in ousting Holland and France from India, although Holland continued to dominate over the Indonesian islands, and France brought Indo-China under its way.

The manner in which the English people ventured to India's shores, waited patiently for a hundred and fifty years, plying their trade as humble merchants, till its political fortunes began to wane, and then subjugated the country, is an amazing phenomenon of human history. In order to understand it, it is necessary to review the ideological and institutional conditions of the Europe of these times.

Mercantilism in Europe

In the sixteenth century Europe had left its medieval agrarian system behind, and entered upon the age of mercantilism, which implied the emergence of the burgher plutocracy, of the merchant-capitalist or bourgeois middle class.

Mercantilism was not just an economic doctrine, a trend of thought, or a philosophy of life. It was a pattern of society.

The mercantilist system marked the transition from medievalism to modernism, from feudal anarchy to national solidarity. It strengthened cooperative tendencies in agriculture, industry and commerce. The breakdown of the manorial system of agriculture, and the enfranchisement of industry and commerce from the hide-bound regulations of craft-gilds, led to the expansion of production and cooperative trading. Local and sectional interests were overruled by the larger interests of the country as a whole. Municipal customs and practices were replaced by uniform standards of legislation on a country-wide basis. The self-sufficiency of the village and the town

was merged in the broader self-sufficiency of the nation. On the one hand, mercantilism fed the self-assertion of the individual; on the other, it promoted the growth of cooperation between them. This dual development found expression in the rise of the entrepreneur class, whose skill, foresight and enterprise led to a better exploitation of resources, an improvement of techniques, and an opening of new undertakings and markets; and also to the founding of joint enterprises and the pooling of capital for the pursuit of commerce abroad. As a result, a great impetus was given to banking, credit, national industry, and foreign trade. Mobility of labour was increased, and specialisation of labour and industry grew. Small producers were replaced by captains of large industry, merchant princes and financiers.

Mercantilism prescribed a new code of ethics. In the Middle Ages economics was not separated from religion and morality and was guided by the injunctions of the Church. Now enlightened self-interest supplanted religion and morality. "Belief in unalterable laws of social causation—a rationalism often accompanied by a strictly non-moral and non-humanitarian view of social life"[1] superseded Christian law and doctrine. Says Adam Smith: "It is not from the benevolence of the butcher, the brewer, or the baker, that we expect our dinner, but from their regard to their own interest. We address ourselves, not to their humanity but to their self-love and never talk to them of our own necessities but of their advantages."[2] Self-love was, thus, raised to the position of the governing principle in the intercourse of human society. Adam Smith adds: "Man's self-love is God's providence." The new code justified all means by their results, and this "made them (merchants) even more ruthless in their insistence upon setting aside all sorts of time-honoured customs and human needs.... They had recourse to almost all the time-honoured methods of coercion."[3]

Freed from the restraints of religious authority, the individual had to pay undivided obedience to the authority of the State. "While the mediaeval conception of the object of human effort was the salvation of human souls and while economic liberalism aimed at the temporal welfare of individuals, mercantilist statesmen and writers saw in the

[1] Heckscher, E. F., 'Mercantilism', in *The Encyclopaedia of the Social Sciences*, Vol X, p 338
[2] Adam Smith, *The Wealth of Nations* (Modern Library edition), p 14
[3] Heckscher, E F, 'Mercantilism', *op. cit*, p. 339

subjects of the state the means to an end, and the end was the power of the state itself."[1]

Thus mercantilism helped in removing the ecclesiastical limits upon the powers of the State, and the Leviathan was ushered into existence. Appropriately enough, Thomas Hobbes appeared at the right time to bless its nativity and to cast its horoscope.

The political system which the middle class required in order to fulfil its economic needs was the one delineated by Hobbes. In this system the State was endowed with supreme authority, an authority which would overbear the two rival powers of the Middle Ages, viz. the Church and the nobility. The Church lost power because of its restrictive regulations which curtailed the initiative of the individual; and the nobility lost it because it disturbed peace and interfered with the freedom of business enterprise. A secular State, with unlimited power to maintain conditions in which the middle class could achieve its material objects at home and abroad, was what Hobbes contemplated and the times required.

Mercantilism's chief concern was the material prosperity of the nation. Its attitude was secular and its outlook scientific. It involved a new awareness of the world which surrounds man—a new interest in geographical discovery, in astronomy, in the forces and phenomena of nature—and it favoured the application of reason in the regions of speculation and action.

The founding of the Royal Society in 1645 gave fitting expression to this mood. Its historian, Thomas Sprat, the Bishop of Rochester, noted, "Now men are generally weary of the relics of antiquity and satiated with religious disputes....now there is a universal desire and appetite for knowledge."[2]

The middle class which practised the mercantilist philosophy was the dominant factor in the politics of the age. It exerted its influence to mould the policies of the State for the fulfilment of its twin aims of power and wealth. It needed State power for promoting industrial expansion, stimulating production by measures of protection against foreign competition, and eliminating internal restrictions. The aim was to make the country self-sufficient by banning the import of manufactured articles and encouraging their export. The

[1] *Ibid*, p 335

[2] See *The History of the Royal Society*, 1667, p. 152. Quoted by E. Lipson, *The Economic History of England*, Vol. II, p. xlii

mercantilists encouraged the import of precious metals—gold and silver—because that helped to increase profits by raising the price of goods, and, at the same time, augmented the capacity of the State to provide for larger and better equipped armed forces. Thus the idea that money was wealth and that, therefore, exports should be balanced by the import of bullion, became popular. The mercantilists believed that the volume of world trade was fixed and that the wealth of one nation inevitably implied the poverty of others.

Regarding international trade, they were exclusionists who would not hesitate to resort to war in order to clear the markets of their rivals. Nor were they prepared to allow competition even among their own nationals, because competition tended to diminish profits. This led to a seeking for exclusive privileges, special concessions, and monopolies. The desire for markets to sell goods dear and purchase raw materials cheap, naturally suggested colonialism, conquest and dominion.

Thus mercantilist economic activity welcomed the laws obtaining in the Hobbesian state of nature. Trade was conducted with the sword in hand, with the result that there was perpetual commercial war between all European powers from the sixteenth to the eighteenth century. The English sea captains scoured the seas claimed by the Portuguese and the Spaniards, and carried on smuggling and piracy in the Atlantic and the Indian Oceans. Ships laden with treasure or merchandise were looted and captured, and vast quantities of wealth were seized by violent exploits. Hawkins hunted for slaves on the coast of West Africa, transported them to America, and earned large profits. Drake and Frobisher, Gilbert and Raleigh, sailed the seas, indulged in illegal trade, plundered ships, captured booty and annexed territories to plant English colonies.

The establishment of colonies fulfilled the aims of mercantilism, for they were needed to supplement the inadequate resources of England in the raw materials required for some of its principal industries, for example, shipbuilding. The general opinion was that "colonies existed to serve as 'an inexhaustible mine of treasure' to their mother country in consuming its manufactures, and producing commodities which would prevent the drain of money abroad to purchase foreign wares."[1]

[1] Lipson, E, *The Economic History of England*, Vol. III, p. 155

The settlements in America and Ireland furnish the best example of the colonial system. The ideal on which the system was based was that "of self-sufficiency, of a self-contained empire in which the mother country produced all the manufactured goods required, and the colonies all the raw material and tropical luxuries which were fast becoming necessities of civilized life."[1]

With this end in view, the British "Parliament had passed a succession of Acts making up a definite system of restrictions on colonial trade....that only English vessels and English subjects might trade with the colonies; that the colonists were restricted to English ports for most of their exports and all their imports; and that certain duties were imposed on intercontinental trade."[2] Political restraints were enforced in the American colonies. "Representation was swept away; all administration, legislation and taxation were vested in the governor and council."[3] The governor was nominated by the King of England and vacancies in the council were filled by him.

In Ireland worse conditions prevailed. By the promulgation of Poynings Law in 1494, the freedom of the Irish Parliament was repressed. Under Tudor rule, the Reformation was forcibly introduced and the recalcitrant chiefs subjugated. When rebellions occurred they were ruthlessly suppressed. The lands of the rebels were confiscated and distributed among English protestants. The import of cattle from Ireland into England was forbidden; so also were yarn, leather and cheese. Ireland was not allowed to send its woollen cloth abroad lest it compete with the English cloth. Thus Irish manufactures were ruined. The six counties of Ulster became the plantations of England, and Ireland lay prostrate and bleeding at England's feet.

Mercantilism, which represented a higher stage of socio-economic evolution, marched forward in an environment of utter natural selfishness and extreme violence. According to Adam Smith, "what all the violence of the feudal institutions could never have effected, the silent and insensible operation of foreign commerce and manufactures gradually brought about."[4] The English East India Company was a typical product of mercantilism.

[1] Williamson, J. A., *A Short History of British Expansion*, p. 424
[2] *The Cambridge Modern History*, Vol. VII, p. 28
[3] *Ibid*, p. 29
[4] Smith, Adam, *The Wealth of Nations*, op. cit, p 388

The East India Company

The foundation of the Company was the culmination of a long process of mercantile enterprise. As early as 1313, the Fellowship of Staples was established which exercised a monopoly in wool trade. A century later (1407), the Company of Merchant Adventurers was formed, which traded in woollen cloth instead of wool, and heralded England's entry into the age of manufacture.

With the beginning of the sixteenth century a rapid advance took place in the development of the company system. In the middle of the century the Muscovy Company, the first of its type, came into existence. Then a number of companies obtained royal charters for trade—the African Company in 1567, the Spanish Company in 1577, the Eastland Company in 1578, and the Turkey Company in 1581. The latter became amalgamated in the Levant Company in 1592. Ultimately in December 1600, Queen Elizabeth gave a charter to the East India Company, "for the honour of our nation, the wealth of our people". The charter provided for the management of the Company by its own governing body consisting of the governor, the deputy-governor and twenty-four members of the committee; but the power of regulating its internal management was retained in the hands of the crown and the Privy Council. The charter, granted in exercise of the royal prerogative, invested the Company for fifteen years with powers to hold property, to maintain discipline over its members and servants, and to exercise exclusive privileges of trade.

Elizabeth showed great interest in the Company and contributed to its funds. The Company thus launched was true to the mercantilist ideas of the times. It exercised an armed and chartered monopoly of the permanent Indian trade—"armed sea-trade on its largest scale, and with the fullest powers of expansion and self-defence."[1]

The East India Company had a chequered history. During its first hundred years it had to face three sets of problems. The first set arose out of its character as a monopoly based upon royal prerogative. For, soon after its incorporation, the royal dynasty changed and with the accession of the Stuarts started a political struggle between the people and the kings.

(i) The first problem—East India Company's internal difficulties

James I (1603-25) extended his support and protection to the

[1] Hunter, W W., *A History of British India*, Vol. I, p. 253

Company. He renewed the charter of Elizabeth in 1609, and made the position of the Company stronger by extending the period of the charter from fifteen years to perpetuity. Later he offered to become a shareholder and to support it with royal authority, but the Company evaded this embarrassing partnership.

Already in the reign of James I, attempts to break down the Company's monopoly had begun. Charles I (1625-49) quarrelled with his Parliament and vacillated in his support of the Company. In his great need for money, he encouraged a rival company—Courten's Association—by granting it a license for the East India trade. Then a long struggle ensued which was ultimately resolved by Cromwell in 1657, by the grant of a new charter, which made the Company a united and continuous joint stock corporation, and eliminated all its rivals.

Although the favours of Cromwell were an embarrassment when Charles II was restored, the Company won the goodwill of the new regime by effusive loyalty, accompanied with vast gifts to the King in the shape of loans. Charles II reciprocated with the grant of a number of charters which guaranteed the Company's monopoly. He secured to the Company its possessions by diplomacy and war, and enhanced its powers—noteworthy among them being the erection of fortifications, and transport of men for garrisoning them. But his greatest favour was the transfer of the port of Bombay, which commanded the whole of the western coast. Bombay became a colony, and furnished a military base which enabled the Company to wield armed authority from the Bay of Bengal to the mid-Atlantic.

By the end of Stuart rule the Company had become "a body standing apart from the nation, yet wielding in India the national powers of coining money, levying taxes, building ports, maintaining troops, and making war or peace".[1] Its affairs had made rapid progress; profits had increased enormously, and the price of its stock had soared from £100 per share to £360 and to £500 in 1683. The value of its trade had so multiplied that the Company was accused of devouring "above half the trade of the nation".[2]

By the Revolution of 1688, the authority of the King was transferred to the Parliament. The old complaint against the Company's monopoly was now revived. The Directors strove hard to avoid dissolution

[1] *Ibid.*, Vol. II, p. 275
[2] *Ibid*, p. 278

and poured out large sums to bribe the Ministers and the Court. Nevertheless, in 1698 the Parliament passed an Act by which a new East India Company was established. This created a curious situation, for it brought into open conflict the two companies, one based upon royal charters and the other upon an Act of Parliament. The war between the two lasted for ten years, until by Godolphin's Award of 1708, they were amalgamated.

The united Company embodied all the traits of the mercantilist system, namely monopoly, armed trade and colonialism. "The East India Company did not seem to be merely a Company formed for the extension of the British commerce, but in reality a delegation of the whole power and sovereignty of this kingdom sent into the East."[1]

(ii) The second problem—East India Company's rivals

If its first set of difficulties were due to the effort to preserve the monopoly of the Indian trade, the second set arose out of the Company's position as armed traders. The concept of armed trade was inherent in the belief that a country's desire to enrich itself could only be realised at the expense of others.

The Portuguese were the first in the field of East Indian commerce. They had discovered the sea-route to India and driven the merchants and ships of the Muslim countries out of the Indian Ocean. They were, likewise, the pioneers of the methods of trade. They built fortresses, maintained garrisons equipped with ammunition and materials of war, seized and colonised territories, waged wars againts non-Christians offering them the alternative of Christianity or the sword, and committed barbarous and inhuman atrocities like blowing persons from the mouths of guns, cutting off the hands and ears of women in order to snatch their bracelets and earrings, and slaughtering people wholesale without sparing women and children. They had carried on their blood-stained commerce by violence and terror. They also showed the way in recruiting and training Indian soldiers for their armies, and in taking advantage of the rivalries of Asian princes to build up their empire. Vain, ostentatious, pompous and corrupt, they were the first as well as the worst representatives of the West to venture to the East. Abbé Raynal described them as "a

[1] Burke, Edmund, Speeches in the trial of Warren Hastings, quoted in *Cambridge History of India* (Indian edition), Vol. V, p 182

decaying race", ferocious in religious fanaticism, an unscrupulous scourge of all nations bordering upon the ocean, factious, avaricious, cruel and debauched. "Effeminacy pervaded their armies,. . .neither discipline, subordination, nor the love of glory, animated either the soldiers or the officers."[1] Deservedly nemesis overtook them soon, and the protestant nations of the North wrecked their empire and drove them out of the Eastern waters.

In 1580, Philip II of Spain seized the throne of Portugal and for the next sixty years the two kingdoms remained federated under a single crown. Together they formed the bulwark of the Roman Catholic faith, and naturally became the target of attack from the protestant states of Europe. Holland was the spearhead of the Reformation. She revolted against Spanish suzerainty and won her independence in 1579. But hostilities continued. Holland, which was the pre-eminent sea power of Europe at that time, was supported by the other protestant power, namely, England, against united Spain and Portugal. A life and death struggle ensued in which armies, fleets and merchant ships were engaged. Ultimately the Catholic powers were worsted and their trade monopoly was destroyed.

The main burden of the war in the East fell upon the Dutch. They expelled the Portuguese from the Spice Islands, the Malay Straits, Ceylon and the Cape of Good Hope. But when they had brought these regions under their sway, their trade followed the same principles of monopoly, of buying cheap and selling dear, and subjecting the inhabitants to ruthless exploitation and harsh government.

The Dutch had eliminated the Portuguese, and were in no mood to tolerate the English in what they regarded as their exclusive domain of trade. So, in spite of community of aims in Europe and a wavering alliance, they set about excluding the English. The struggle was ended by the so-called massacre of Amboyna (1623). In consequence the English were forced to abandon the Archipelago and confine their enterprise to India. The Dutch too found the task of protecting their interests both in India and the Archipelago beyond their strength and concentrated their attention upon the Spice Islands.

The situation in Europe was responsible for this withdrawal. The Dutch were hemmed in on all sides by rivals and enemies, and soon after they had brought the Eastern Archipelago under their exclusive

[1] Anderson, P., *The English in Western India* (Bombay, 1854), p 16

control, they were plunged into wars on the continent. First came the war with Spain which was concluded by the Peace of Westphalia in 1648. Then followed wars with England in 1652 and 1665, and lastly came the struggle against France from 1672 to 1713. A continuous drain of man-power and finances for a small country like Holland was bound to exhaust its resources. By the time England emerged from its troubles, civil wars and political revolution, Holland had almost ceased to be a serious rival for power.

(iii) The third problem—East India Company's settlements

The armed conflict which the East India Company had to wage against the Portuguese and the Dutch, compelled them to seek their fortunes on the mainland of India. Their early attempts to gain a footing were failures. Neither Hawkins nor Sir Thomas Roe could achieve much success.

In the beginning the Portuguese Jesuits at the Mughal court thwarted the English Company's efforts to obtain an imperial *farman* for establishing a factory. Later when permission was secured from Jahangir in 1608, the local governor raised difficulties. Middleton, the commander of the sixth voyage of the Company's ships, brought pressure to bear upon him by holding up traffic between Gujarat and the Red Sea in 1617. Best and Downton's victories over the Portuguese off Swally in 1612 and 1615, removed the governor's hesitation, and the English settled down at Surat.

But the concession was abused. The English were supreme on the sea and they made use of their power to "eat the Guzerats out of that (Red Sea) trade", rousing thereby the hostility of the emperor. Roe's advice to the Company was, "I know these people (the Mughals) are best treated with the sword in one hand and caducean in the other."[1] What Edward Terry, his chaplain, says about the ways of the Dutch, is applicable to the English, that they "by fortifying themselves in the place wherever they settle, and then standing upon their guard, put a kind of force upon the natives to sell them their commodities."[2]

It was in accordance with this policy that Middleton held up traffic between Gujarat and the Red Sea in 1611, and Captain Keeling tried to obtain a port on the Malabar coast from the Raja of

[1] See Thompson and Garratt, *Rise and Fulfilment of British Rule in India* (1958 edition), p. 15

[2] Terry, Edward, *A Voyage to East India* (1777 edition), pp. 5-6

Calicut in 1616. But the Mughal empire was still too strong for any attempt at fortification on the Gujarat coast, and the Portuguese would not permit any encroachment round about Goa.

The English, therefore, were unable to realise their desire for territory and forts on the western coast. The Mughal Government exercised strict control over them. In 1625, the chiefs of the English factory were imprisoned in irons. Again when the servants of Courten's Association committed piracies, the Governor of Surat threw Methwold, the President, and his Council, into prison in 1636, from which they were released on payment of £18,000.

While the English were suffering these humiliations, the Deccan was being trampled under the hoofs of the Mughal horsemen. In 1636 Aurangzeb was the viceroy of the Deccan. From that time onwards the Mughal empire, the Bahmani succession Sultanates, and the Marathas under Shivaji, were locked in fierce conflicts which rendered the hinterland unsafe for any English settlements.

Shivaji's career of conquests had begun in 1647 when he stormed the fort of Torna. In 1664 and again in 1670, he attacked Surat. These raids made the situation impossible. Trade could not be carried on without military protection against European rivals and Indian chiefs. Territories, fortifications, garrisons and military equipment were necessary. But, for these, permission from the Mughal emperor was not easily obtainable. Fortunately, Bombay was transferred to the Company by King Charles II in 1668, and steps were immediately taken to fortify it. But between the Mughals and the Marathas, the English factories on the west coast remained exposed to danger till the death of Aurangzeb.

From this predicament escape was sought on the eastern coast of India. Here conditions were more favourable, for after the overthrow of the Vijayanagar empire, on the battlefield of Talikota, in 1565, the kingdom was broken up into small fragments, and the petty princes of the region were menaced by the growing power of the Qutubshahis of Golkanda. From Orissa down to the Coromandel coast, a number of ports—Balasore, Pipli, Pulicat, Pattapoli, Masulipatam—were tried. At some of these places factories were built, but none of them was found satisfactory. At last in 1639 Madras was occupied.

But Madras was far too distant from the Gangetic delta, where the main streams of north Indian commerce converged. The English,

therefore, turned their attention to Bengal. Here on the Hu which is the south-western channel of the delta, the Portuguese built a factory long ago, but Shah Jahan had thrown them ou 1632. In 1650 the Company beseeched the Governor of Benga permission to trade there, and was granted a license. The Compa establishments in Bengal were placed under the control of Fort George at Madras.

In the period from 1649 to 1689 the Company's trade m great progress. But as trade prospered and profits increased, its ar tions rose. By the Charter of 1661, it was authorised to make p and war and administer justice. Armed with governmental autho some of the merchants began to dream of power and dominion 1674, Sir Josiah Child became a Director of the Company and the next twenty-five years he exercised extraordinary ascenda over its counsels. "Under his guidance the Company began for first time to rush impetuously after political importance and pow A distant relation of his, Sir John Child, who had served in I since he was a mere lad, became, in 1682, the President of the C pany's factories at Surat and Bombay. The two Childs were de mined to vindicate the Company's authority both against the Eng rivals, who threatened to break down their monopoly, and Mughal rulers, who obstructed their ambition to increase t revenue.

Against the English interlopers they issued peremptory order exclude them from Indian trade. They spared "no severity to c their countrymen", holding that "the laws of England, which v an heap of nonsense, compiled by a few ignorant country gentlen who hardly knew how to make laws for the good of their own pri families, much less for the regulating of Companies and for commerce."[2] The interlopers were seized and dragged before Admiralty Courts.

In India the ambition of Sir Josiah Child was to "estat such a politie of civill and military powers, and create and se such a large Revenue as may bee the foundation of a large, w grounded, sure English Dominion in India for all time to com Sir John was ready to execute the policy adumbrated by Sir Jos

[1] Anderson, P., *The English in Western India*, p. 109
[2] Mill and Wilson, *The History of British India*, (fifth edition, 1858), Vol. I, p 91, n
[3] Hunter, W W., *A History of British India*, Vol. II, p. 273

He was the more inclined to do so as the Company "owed £281,250 to natives of Surat, and it had become inconvenient to discharge even the interest of such a sum. Instead therefore of following the old-fashioned way and paying, they were resolved to discover some other means of escaping their obligations."[1] So these agents of an essentially dishonest system of administration involved the Company in a war with the Mughal empire. "The Court pompously announced that they were determined to levy war, not only on the Nawab of Bengal, but in the sequel on the Emperor himself."[2]

Preparations were made on a vast scale. Armed vessels mounted with guns were obtained, several companies of infantry were raised, and an entire company of regular infantry with their officers was sent for from England. Madras was fortified and walled in. In Bengal, Chatgaon (Chittagong) was to be forcibly occupied and fortified, Hughli was to be vacated and a port nearer the sea acquired. On the west coast, Indian shipping was to be destroyed and war declared on the Mughal empire. "Of this vast programme, conceived in ludicrous ignorance of the geographical distances and with astounding disregard of the opposing forces, not a single item was carried out."[3] It was too early for this aspect of the mercantilist policy of the Company to be executed successfully. The Mughal empire was still a going concern and soon the Company found out that it could not be defied with impunity.

In Bengal, Nawab Shaista Khan's troops drove the English out of Hijili where they had taken refuge, and did not permit them to seize Chatgaon (Chittagong). In other parts of India, the Mughal reaction was equally swift and drastic. The factories at Surat, Masulipatam and Vizagapatam were seized. Bombay was attacked by the Sidi's fleet and the whole island with the exception of the castle was occupied. The English were humbled, and in the words of their historian Mill, "they stooped to the most abject submissions."[4] They submitted a humble petition "that the ill crimes they have done may be pardoned". The emperor listened to the entreaties of their envoys and agreed to grant a new *farman* in 1690, on condition that the Company paid all the dues of the Indian merchants, gave compen-

[1] Anderson, P., *The English in Western India*, p. 110
[2] *Ibid*, p. 111
[3] Hunter, W. W., *A History of British India*, Vol. II, p 248
[4] Mill and Wilson, *The History of British India*, *op. cit.*, Vol. I, p. 86

sation for the losses inflicted on the empire, and recalled Sir John Child from India. On the fulfilment of these terms, Bombay was evacuated and the old permits for trade on the west coast and in Bengal were restored.

The Company returned to Bengal, rented the three villages of Sutanati, Govindpur and Calcutta from the Nawab, and became a zamindar. They built Fort William at Calcutta for the protection of their trade.

They had learnt their lesson. For the next fifty years they refrained from giving any offence to the rulers of India. On the other hand, they resorted to fawning and flattery in order to ingratiate themselves into the Mughal emperor's favour for obtaining privileges and concessions.

In 1708 the chapter of troubles closed. The Company's struggle for exclusive rights of trade had been crowned with success, their two European rivals, the Portuguese and the Dutch, had been eliminated, and they had gained invaluable experience of dealing with the authorities in India. The Company had succeeded in establishing itself firmly at three important centres in India—at Bombay on the western coast, at Madras on the Coromandel coast and at Calcutta in Bengal. None of these places was within easy reach of the arms of the Mughal empire, and all of them could be, more or less, adequately defended by a power which commanded the seas around India.

At these ports the Company had built up an exceedingly profitable trade with India. But their course had not been smooth and easy. Following the principles of mercantilism, the Directors of the East India Company were pursuing two aims. "To acquire political privilege was their first ambition; their second that as few as possible should enjoy it."[1] In order to gain their ends, they "had to be ingratiating as well as crafty; they had to temper extortion with fawning, combine avarice with flattery, and clothe a usurer's hardness in the vestments of chivalry. . and they minded nothing whether what they bartered was slaves or ivory, wool or woollens, tin or gold as long as it was lucrative."[2] These methods were tried equally at home and in India, and if results are a fair criterion, they proved completely efficacious.

[1] Dobb, Maurice, *Studies in the Development of Capitalism* (London, 1946), p. 121
[2] *Ibid*

East India Company's territorial expansion

With the union of the two Companies, a new era begins in the history of British relations with India. Mill remarks: "Before this period they (the Company) had maintained the character of mere traders, and, by humility and submission, endeavoured to preserve a footing in that distant country, under the protection or oppression of the native princes. We shall now behold them entering the lists of war; and mixing with eagerness in the contests of princes."[1]

The political situation was favourable. From the Treaty of Utrecht (1713) till the war of the Austrian Succession (1740), Europe was free from wars. Spain, Holland and France were all exhausted after the wars of Louis XIV and were engaged in an endeavour to recover from their effects. England was led by Walpole, whose policy was to let sleeping dogs lie. There was no serious challenge to the monopoly of the East India Company. In India the empire of the Mughals was rushing headlong towards anarchy, and the provincial governors and the Maratha chiefs were spreading dread and destruction in every direction. Murshidabad, Lucknow and Hyderabad were now more important than Delhi, and Poona's influence was increasing in all parts of India.

The Company had found that a direct attack upon the Mughal empire was hazardous. But it had not, by any means, departed from the policy the Directors had formulated in 1689, viz. "The increase of our revenue is the subject of our care as much as our trade : 'tis that must maintain our force, when twenty accidents may interrupt our trade; 'tis that must make us a nation in India;—without that we are but a great number of interlopers, united by his Majesty's royal charter, fit only to trade where nobody of power thinks it their interest to prevent us."[2]

How this policy to increase revenue was implemented is shown in the intervention of the Company in the affairs of Tanjore. It is best stated in the words of Mill. He writes: "it was after having corresponded for years with Prataup Singh, as King of Tanjore, after having offered to him the friendship of the English nation; and after having courted his assistance against the, French that the English rulers now, without so much as a pretence of any provocation, and without the allegation of any other motive than the advan-

[1] Mill and Wilson, *The History of British India, op cit.*, Vol III, p 60
[2] *Ibid.*, Vol I, pp 87-8

tage of possessing Devi-Cotah, despatched an army to dethrone him."[1] Devikotah fort, with land yielding an annual revenue of 9,000 pagodas[2], was thus acquired.

Meanwhile cautious attempts had been made to acquire territory and to build forts. In 1716 permission was obtained from Farrukh Siyar to purchase land in Surat and rent villages near Calcutta. The gift of five villages near Madras was also confirmed.

On the west coast, a running intermittent war was carried on at sea against the Maratha navy under the Angria. In Bengal, the Company considered it impolitic to risk an open rupture with the Nawab. They tried to keep him in good humour by paying large sums of money to cover up their malpractices; for example, misuse of *dastaks* and "screening immense quantity's of Merchants' Goods, thereby defrauding the king of his customs".[3] Allahwardi Khan (1740-56) kept them under strict control, and gave them no opportunity to repeat in Bengal what they had done in the Deccan. Nor did he allow them to strengthen fortifications at Calcutta.

Thus till the middle of the century, the Company was unable to achieve much towards the fulfilment of its object of acquiring revenue-yielding territory. But in the matter of commerce its success was very encouraging. In 1708 its exports of English goods to India were barely of the value of £61,000; by 1748 they had reached the figure of £127,000. Similarly imports from India into England had risen from £500,000 to nearly £1,000,000. During this period the Company paid eight to ten per cent dividend to its shareholders. Its prosperity was so great that it gave a loan of £1,000,000 to the Government in 1744, and of more than £4,000,000 in 1750.

Anglo-French rivalry

But the success of the English whetted the appetite of their European rivals. Portugal, Spain and Holland had fallen behind in the race and were no longer in a position to challenge England. France, however, made great efforts to capture Indian trade and extend its influence in the East. The French East India Company had been founded by Colbert in 1664. But during the reign of Louis XIV (1643-1715), it could not make much headway because of the wars

[1] *Ibid.*, Vol. III, p 62
[2] One pagoda=Rs. 3-8-0 (Hobson-Jobson)
[3] *The History of Bengal*, edited by Jadunath Sarkar, Vol. II (1948), p. 432

of France against Spain, Holland and the empire. In 1720 John Law reformed the French finances and reconstituted the Company. From now onwards progress was rapid. Mauritius, the half-way island to India, was occupied in 1721, and Mahé and Karikal in 1725 and 1739 respectively. Pondicherry, which became the chief settlement of the French Company, had been lost to the Dutch but recovered by the Treaty of Ryswick in 1697. Chandarnagar had been occupied in 1691.

The reconstituted French Company vigorously followed the dual policy of acquiring political influence and pushing commercial enterprise. It strengthened and fortified its settlements against the Indian chiefs. The French believed, that "prosperous settlements and a few well-fortified places will give (the Company) a great position among these people".[1] But they gave free rein to this policy only after 1740.

The idea of carving out a territorial empire in India took shape in the fertile brain of Dupleix. He was led to it by the exigencies of the French Company whose efforts to promote trade were greatly hampered by the lack of adequate financial support from France. Dupleix realised that the only way of finding the needful funds was through acquisition of revenue-yielding territories, and that the possession of political power alone could solve the problem. Whether "he had seen Asia, like America and like the whole world, destined to submit to the law of European races" or not, he was determined to give India to France.

Dupleix was appointed to the office of First Councillor of the Superior Council of the French Company at Pondicherry in 1720. Ten years later he became the Intendant of the settlement at Chandarnagar, and in 1742, the Governor General of the French establishments in India. The troublous times in Karnatak had already offered opportunities to the European companies to take 'sides' in the civil wars of the petty princes. In 1732, on the death of Nawab Saadatullah Khan of Karnatak, his nephew, Dost Ali, had taken possession of the throne. He befriended the French, and at the request of the French Governor, Dumas, obtained for them the authority of the emperor of Delhi to coin money—a source of considerable profit. Dost Ali's son-in-law, Chanda Sahib, an ambitious young man, desired to attach the powerful alliance of the French to his interests

[1] *The Cambridge History of India*, Vol. V, p. 73

and so offered to attack the kingdom of Tanjore, seize Karikal and hand it over to the French. This was done, and the French obtained possession of Karikal and the districts around it in 1739.

In the placid back waters of Karnatak, and amidst the petty intrigues of the princes, the sudden appearance of the Maratha army of 50,000 horsemen led by Raghuji Bhonsle and his lieutenant Narain Rao, was a bombshell. Dost Ali, who tried to stop them, fell in battle. Safdar Ali, his heir, and Chanda Sahib, took their families to Pondicherry for safety. Raghuji besieged Trichinopoly, captured the fort and took Chanda Sahib prisoner. He then moved on towards Pondicherry, but finding the French fully prepared to defy him, retired.

The fearless conduct of the French Governor, Dumas, earned for him the admiration and respect of the Deccan rulers. Emperor Muhammad Shah conferred upon him the rank of Nawab and a mansab. Nizam-ul-Mulk sent him a dress of honour, and Safdar Ali, Nawab of Karnatak, offered rich presents. At this stage Dumas retired, and Dupleix took over the reins of office (January 1742).

On assuming office, Dupleix found that the situation was far from satisfactory. The Nizam was threatening the Karnatak ruler for arrears of revenue, and the French protégé, Chanda Sahib, was a prisoner of the Marathas. The Maratha chiefs were ready to renew their raids and to levy tribute in the Karnatak. Nor was the condition of the French Company free from anxiety. Its Directors had not sufficient funds to meet the needs of the settlements. A war was impending between England and France, and the Company was unable to provide the necessary funds for the fortifications of their factories. In the face of these difficulties, Dupleix's resolution, patriotism and resourcefulness rose equal to the occasion.

When in March 1740 the War of Austrian Succession broke out in Europe, and France and England became involved in it, the agents of the two mercantile companies in India realised that the existence of the one was incompatible with that of the other. Despite the wishes and instructions of home authorities, they engaged in a struggle for the establishment of their exclusive rights of trade. Dupleix was the first to see that in order to achieve this, it was necessary to obtain political influence and territorial control. He was working under severe handicaps, the Government of France was supine, and Louis XV and his ministers failed to give the necessary support to their

countrymen fighting for the glory of France in India. The French Company was largely dependent upon the government and suffered from its short-sighted, weak and vacillating policies. Although the trade of the Company increased, its expenditure was so high that it fell into heavy indebtedness. So, at this critical juncture, it reduced its contribution to the funds of its establishments in India.

On top of this, there were suicidal disagreements between the highest leaders whose mutual jealousies obstructed combined action. Extraordinary orders from Paris produced a sense of irritation and futility.

The war which lasted for four years went on the whole in favour of the French. The genius of Dupleix triumphed over all difficulties. By his diplomacy he won the support of Indian chiefs and he used them against the English. He made up for the lack of an adequate French army by recruiting Indian soldiers and giving them Western training. He demonstrated the superiority of trained men over the untrained levies of India. In the battle which was fought at St. Thome on the banks of the Adyar river, between the hosts of Mahfuz Khan, son of Anwar-ud-Din, Nawab of Karnatak, and the French Captain Paradis, on November 4, 1746, the French gained a quick and overwhelming victory over the Nawab. The detachment under the command of Paradis consisted of 230 European and 700 Indian soldiers. They had no guns and they had to cross the river in the face of an army of 10,000 men equipped with guns. This difficult manoeuvre was executed successfully. The discipline and organisation of the small army led by capable and intrepid officers won the day. As Malleson has pointed out with just pride, "it may well be asserted that of all the decisive actions that have been fought in India, there is not one more memorable than this . . . . The circumstance which stamps this action as so memorable is that it was the very first of its kind, that it proved, to the surprise of both parties, the absolute and overwhelming superiority of the disciplined European soldier to his Asiatic rival."[1]

Dupleix occupied Madras and drove the English from almost the entire Coromandel coast.

The Treaty of Aix-la-Chapelle (1748) ended the war in Europe, but it did not bring peace between the rivals in India. "With ambition aroused, mutual jealousy excited, the temptation of increased

[1] Malleson, *The History of the French in India* (London, 1868), pp. 192-93

dominion knocking at their doors, what had they to do with peace?"[1]

The year 1748 was memorable. Emperor Muhammad Shah died in this year, and the first invasion of Ahmad Shah Abdali occurred. Nizam-ul-Mulk also passed away, and a war of succession ensued among the claimants to the Masnad. The rivals dragged on their sides the Marathas, the ruler of the Karnatak, the French and the English. Soon the character of the contest changed. The French and the English, instead of being the auxiliaries of the Indian rivals, became the principal protagonists contending for supremacy, in spite of the fact that the two nations were at peace at home.

Dupleix, the Governor General of the French settlements in India, had the perspicacity to see that the English could be eliminated from India only if the Indian governments accepted his direction and also placed their resources at his disposal for use against the English. He was able to give effect to this policy because both in the Deccan and the Karnatak succession disputes gave him the opportunities to interfere. By offering the help of his well-trained European and Indian forces, he turned the scales in favour of his clients. He and his lieutenant Bussy so cleverly managed affairs that from 1748 to 1756 the French were the dominating power in the peninsula. Dupleix was actually made the Nawab of Karnatak—the governor of the entire region south of the Krishna river—and Bussy controlled the affairs of the Deccan, treating the Nizam as a puppet.

But neither the resources and skill of Dupleix nor the daring schemes and unflinching courage of Bussy availed. The French political system was outworn. The French affairs had fallen in the hands of feeble politicians. Financially France was fast verging towards bankruptcy. Its naval forces were neglected. In these conditions, the recall of Dupleix, who by his foresight and determination had carved out a French empire in India, was an irreparable blow to their fortunes. After his departure in 1755, the French lost their hold upon the Deccan and during the Seven Years War, the English administered crushing defeats from which they could not recover.

Fortunately for the English, although the Seven Years War broke out in Europe in August 1756, operations really began in India in 1758. By then the battle of Plassey had been fought and the rich resources of Bengal had passed into the hands of the English. Nothing

[1] *Ibid.*, p. 226

that happened in the Karnatak could alter the future of the two nations in India.

The French efforts in the Deccan during the Seven Years War met with utter disaster. Of the empire built through the labours of Dupleix and Bussy nothing remained but five isolated and disarmed towns on the coast. French political influence completely disappeared.

One by one the rivals had fallen out of the race and the field was left clear for England to execute its designs in India. In the struggle for existence the ablest had won. In the case of Portugal the causes of failure are not far to seek. In the sixteenth century its population consisted of one million souls, far too small to sustain its king's pompous claim to be "Lord of the Conquest, Navigation and Commerce of Ethiopia, Arabia, Persia and India". Its aims were too vast—to conduct a crusade against the world of Islam, to spread the gospel among the heathen nations, to capture the spice trade, and to establish rule over half the world. Portugal lacked men, experience and wisdom for the tremendous task it had undertaken. The strain broke its strength, and with the failure of the royal dynasty the enterprise based upon royalty failed.

In 1580, the Portuguese crown was inherited by the Spanish king. The union brought no accession of strength. Spain's finances were in a chaotic state. During the sixteenth century prices had risen five fold. Production suffered a decline, markets were lost and industry was paralysed. Inflation enriched the wealthy and the aristocratic but impoverished the poor, the wage earner and the consumer. The class cleavage increased and the struggle between the two classes was intensified. The idle rich and the starving millions glowered at each other. A moral canker ate into the vitals of society. While wealth created envy and provoked rivalry, the nation lacked the spirit to resist. So the Dutch "sea beggars" and the English "sea captains" laid the Spanish empire into dust.

Then the Dutch, a nation of hardly five millions, entered boldly into the inheritance of the Portuguese. The instrument which they created for the realisation of their mercantilist purposes was a quasi-national company. It was entrusted with a dual function—trade and war. It was endowed with large powers—the monopoly of Eastern trade, freedom from import duties, maintenance of armed forces on land and sea, erection of forts, plantation of colonies, making of war

and peace, arranging treaties, earning money and exercising administrative, judicial and legislative authority within its jurisdiction.

But the close association of the Company and the Dutch States General involved it in the vicissitudes of national fortune. From the outset Holland was engaged in constant wars, first against Portugal and Spain, then from the middle of the seventeenth century against England, and later against the France of Louis XIV. "All through the eighteenth century the Company's commitments as a sovereign power increased; garrisons became more numerous, the expenses of administration grew. As a result, although its trade continued to prosper, the Company's finances became more and more involved."[1]

The dependence of the Company upon the State in the matter of funds for the purpose of carrying on war against its enemies was a crippling arrangement. The land wars led to the neglect of the navy. The Company suffered enormous losses in its trade because most of its centres brought no profit, its debts continued to increase till they reached the enormous figure of one hundred million guilders. The control of the States General in the appointments of the Directorate and the decision of policies proved unhealthy. The Company suffered from the fluctuations of the Government's fortunes. When, therefore, the wars of the French Revolution broke out and Holland became a part of the Napoleonic system, the English fleets swept the Dutch out of the Indian waters.

The French awoke from their "slumber of idleness", when Pyrard de Laval and Martin de Vitre made the voyage to India in 1601, at the risk of their lives. But attempts to start trade with the Eastern countries misfired till Colbert, the great champion of mercantilism, founded the French East India Company in 1664. But it met with the hostility of the French manufacturers and its activity was greatly curtailed. Louis XIV's wars with maritime powers paralysed French overseas commerce and the Company's business was still further reduced. From this moribund condition, John Law rescued it in 1720. But it became a department of the State, without any initiative or sense of responsibility. Its Directors were nominated by the king from the shareholders, and they carried out the decisions of the two High Commissioners, who were appointed by the Government. The Controller General of France presided over the meetings of the Directors and all matters of importance required his approval. The

[1] *Cambridge History of India*, Vol. V, p 57

Company was loaded with powers which the mercantilist policy determined—monopoly of trade and the right to make war and peace.

But lack of independence stifled initiative and the opposition of the industrialists prevented the formulation of far-sighted commercial policies. The dominance of the Government in the Councils exposed the Company to all the ills from which the French State suffered in the eighteenth century. The finances were mismanaged, the Company was in debt and adequate funds were not available for the schemes of Dupleix. The preoccupations of Louis XIV with wars on the Continent consigned the merchant marine and the navy to neglect. France had to pay a heavy price for its inefficiency and maladministration. Its feudal political system was wholly unsuited to the conditions of the eighteenth century. During the Revolution the system crashed, and it brought down with it the institutions that were subsisting under its support.

The English East India Company was more fortunate than its rivals. It was an independent concern, untrammelled in its transactions by governmental interference. Its relations with the State were elastic and while it was affected by civil wars and political revolutions, it was never deeply involved in constitutional upheavals, nor vitally concerned in foreign wars. Whoever wielded power, king or Parliament, its interests were on the whole safe, for England recognised the value of its contribution to the development of sea power and the growth of national prosperity. The English political system, whether a monarchy as under the Tudors, or a Parliamentary dictatorship such as Cromwell's, or a higher middle class oligarchy of the eighteenth century, was responsive to the wishes of the people and anxious to promote their welfare. It was thus superior to the systems existing in Portugal, Spain and France.

The organisation of the Company and its business methods were also better than those of the French and the Dutch companies. Unlike them, the English East India Company was a solvent body which advanced loans to needy governments. It had evolved plans of trade which benefited the country without affecting the development of its industry. The bullion which went out as a trickle came back in a flood of goods for consumption and re-export, and contributed to the enrichment of England. The inherent superiority of the English Company told, for though severely tested, it triumphed in the end.

Bengal on the eve of conquest

Before the War of Austrian Succession broke the peace of Europe, the English and the French, the two competitors for mastery in southern India, had agreed to suspend their warlike activities. The truce of 1754 marked the failure of Dupleix's grand design, and although another Frenchman of genius, Bussy, was still maintaining his precarious ascendancy over the Nizam of the Deccan, the weaknesses of the French position in India had become manifest. So, whilst the French were licking their wounds and preparing for the impending contest which they regarded as inevitable, the English were flushed with the pride of success. Of the game started by the French they had learnt all the tricks and outmatched their masters. They had defeated the schemes of the French and achieved diplomatic gains over them. They had taken the measure of the Indian chiefs and their military capacity. They were fortunate that between 1756 and 1758, in spite of the war in Europe, they were free from actual embroilment in a serious struggle with their rivals. But in the interval a new challenge to their plans in India had suddenly appeared in Bengal.

In 1756, Allahwardi Khan, the Nawab of Bengal, who had ruled the province for fifteen years, died. His death opened a fateful chapter in the history of India. Bengal had been lucky in the first half of the eighteenth century in its governors. Murshid Quli Khan, who was appointed the Diwan of Bengal in 1701, remained at the helm of affairs till his death in 1725. Then his son-in-law Shuja Khan governed the province for fourteen years. After a short interval of two years under the worthless son of Murshid Quli Khan, Allahwardi Khan seized the reins of office and ruled till 1756. All the three were strong and competent administrators, and under them Bengal greatly prospered, so much so, that it was regarded as the paradise of India.

There were many reasons for this. While the rest of India was distracted by fratricidal wars, Maratha invasions and Jat uprisings, and northern India was devastated by the invasions of Nadir Shah and Ahmad Shah Abdali, Bengal had remained on the whole tranquil. The Maratha raids (1742-52) had, indeed, been a painful episode, for Orissa had to be ceded to them; otherwise peace was not seriously disturbed. The maintenance of public order was accompanied by administrative measures which led to financial pros-

perity. The two sources of the government's income—land-revenue and trade—both received particular attention.

Bengal, like the other provinces, had suffered from the inordinate expansion of the jagir system under the later Mughals. This was wasteful economically and dangerous politically. Murshid Quli Khan dealt with it drastically. Most of the jagirs in Bengal were resumed and the jagirdars were allotted lands in Orissa. The *khalsa* (crown) lands, thus formed, were taken under the direct control of the Government. In order to settle their land-revenue several courses were open. Todarmal's *zabt* system was the most scientific. It was based on the measurement of the holdings of the peasants, assessment of their average produce and determining the share of the State in cash. This was ruled out by the peculiar soil and climatic conditions of Bengal. In the words of Seton-Karr, "in Lower Bengal, more perhaps than in any other province of India, the most unexpected changes are wrought by the tremendous force of its streams, bringing down a yellow flood in the rainy season. A vast body of water cuts through natural obstacles; sweeps away whole villages; corrodes and absorbs half or the whole of an estate; inundates large tracts, and disappears in the month of October, to leave behind it a fresh alluvial soil, from which every familiar landmark has disappeared, while the bewildered owners make vague guesses at the outlines of their former possessions."[1]

The Bengal peasants lived in small scattered hamlets mostly surrounded by impassable rivers. In these conditions accurate land records could not be maintained for long and, therefore, the Nawabs preferred to farm out the villages. The farmers realised the revenue with the utmost severity, with the result that while the coffers of the State overflowed with money, the peasants were reduced to the utmost penury. The zamindars fared no better. They were suspected of interference with the revenues in their own interests and were deprived of their functions. Amils, or revenue officers, were appointed as collectors. They were mainly Hindus because it was easier to manage the submissive Hindu than the refractory Muslim.

The effect of these measures was that the revenue demand, which was estimated by Todarmal at a little over a crore of rupees, rose to nearly a crore and a half in the time of Murshid Quli Khan, and at the time of Allahwardi Khan's death it had grown to one crore and

[1] Seton-Karr, W. S, *Cornwallis* (Rulers of India Series), pp. 154-55

eighty-six lakhs. Much of the increase was due to the enhancement of cesses. But although the demand continued to grow, the actual realisation was much lower than the demand. In 1762-63, while the demand was pegged at over seven and a half crores of rupees, the realisations were less than 50 per cent. Yet, in spite of these arrears, the annual income of the province continued to increase.

The second important source of provincial income was the customs duty. During this period there had been a phenomenal growth of foreign trade. Dacca alone exported nearly thirty lakhs of rupees worth of cloth to Asian countries. Qasim Bazar produced two and a half million pounds of silk. The Murshidabad customs office registered an output of silk worth seventy lakhs of rupees. Fifty thousand maunds of sugar were supplied to the Persian Gulf and the Indian provinces from Bengal, and also a considerable amount of jute. There were a number of other commodities which were sold abroad, viz. saltpetre, opium, etc. During the half century from 1706 to 1756, Bengal received in return for its exports nearly six and a half crore rupees worth of bullion and about 2.3 crores of merchandise.

Indian goods were in demand in the East-Asian and West-Asian countries, in Africa and in Europe, and the European merchants who had replaced the Indians and other Asians from the lucrative business of maritime transport were gathering large profits. The overseas trade had grown to vast proportions and in spite of low customs duties (2·5 per cent *ad valorem*) and exemption from their payment enjoyed by the English, the income of the Mughal empire as a whole, and of the Bengal province in particular, was considerable.

Foreign trade stimulated industry and added to the prosperity of the country. This explains why the Indian rulers treated the English and other merchants with so much consideration. There were numerous instances of this. Aurangzeb restored all the favours granted to the English East India Company in spite of the war of 1686-89. Farrukh Siyar overruled the Governor of Bengal, and by means of an imperial order renewed exemption from customs duties in 1716. Azim-ush-Shan permitted the Dutch, the French and the English to fortify their factories and to maintain Indian soldiers for their protection. Murshid Quli Khan showed great indulgence to merchants with the result that Hughli grew into a great centre of culture; the population of Calcutta rose from 15,000 in 1704 to a lakh in 1750, and Dacca and Murshidabad became populous cities.

Progress in trade, industry and agriculture stimulated banking, as is illustrated by the rise of the Jagat Seths (world bankers). They issued bills of exchange of one crore of rupees at a time on behalf of the provincial government. Murshid Quli Khan used to send the annual revenue of Bengal to Delhi through their agents. Naturally they played an important part in the politics of the times.

Other measures were adopted for increasing wealth. Economies were effected in the expenditure of government. But the reduction of the armed forces in the interest of economy to 2,000 cavalry and 4,000 infantry was a measure of doubtful wisdom.

In the sombre picture of decadence, prostration and bankruptcy which India presented, Bengal was the only bright spot where prosperity prevailed, "the only mine of silver left in the Mughal empire". Thus it happened that when all other provinces were failing, Aurangzeb depended upon Murshid Quli Khan to finance his wasteful campaigns in the Deccan. He received a crore of rupees every year from Bengal and in return gave an absolutely free hand to the governor to do as he liked. He told him, "you are diwan and faujdar with full powers, and nobody's allegation against you is acceptable to me."[1]

Unfortunately, behind this facade of glittering affluence there lay a dilapidated structure, so feeble as to crumble at the first touch of the storm that blew across the seas. The wealth of the Nawab and of his oppressive oligarchs was extracted out of the toil and misery of the impoverished peasants and wretched artisans. The upstart rulers and their long suffering subjects were bound together by mere ropes of sand.

The foreigners who lived amidst the people had studied closely the strength and weakness of the system. They entertained a very poor opinion of the Indian rulers' power. Bernier states his opinion on the Indian army in these words: "These immense armies frequently perform great feats; but when thrown into confusion it is impossible to restore them to discipline...I could never see these soldiers, destitute of order, and marching with the irregularity of a herd of animals, without reflecting upon the ease with which five-and-twenty thousand of our veterans from the army of Flanders, commanded by Prince Condé or Marshal Turenne, would overcome an Indian army, however numerous."[2] A writer at the end of the eigh-

[1] Inayetullah's *Ahkam*, 218, see Sarkar, Jadunath, *The History of Bengal*, Vol. II (1948 edition), p. 401

[2] Bernier, F., *op. cit*, p 55

teenth century says, their "composition is no less expensive than defective.... these numerous bodies of robust men and active horse, seem designed for no other purpose than to adorn the march of their chief."[1] The Marquis of Alorna remarking upon the lack of discipline among the rabble forces of Indian chiefs said, "I would have no hesitation with a corps of five thousand regular soldiers to attack such an army though fifty thousand strong."[2] The French and English commanders who had actually fought against the forces of the Indian rulers entertained a very low opinion of their military capacity. For instance, Dupleix wrote to the Company's Directors in Paris, "500 European soldiers could reduce all Moslem strongholds and provinces this side of the Kistna."[3] Clive wrote to William Pitt, on January 7, 1759, "2,000 Europeans........will enable the Company to take the sovereignty upon themselves"[4], from Mir Jafar and Miran.

The fact was that the European armies were "like a giant with a thousand hands which defend and strike according to the dictates of one mind", while the Indian troops, "an ill-disciplined multitude which fighting hand to hand can offer effectually neither injury nor resistance".

Allahwardi Khan appears to have had a dim awareness of this weakness. He seems to have given expression to the presentiment in these words: "it is now difficult to extinguish fire on land, but should the sea be in flames who can put them out?"[5]

When he died in 1756 and his grandson Siraj-ud-Daulah ascended the Masnad of Bengal, the sea was set on fire. This was the year in which Ahmad Shah Abdali had entered the Panjab. The effect on Bengal was that the support of the empire became completely nugatory. Siraj-ud-Daulah assumed the post of Governor probably without making even a reference to Delhi, as the status of the emperor was in doubt.

Conquest of Bengal

Siraj-ud-Daulah was not the ruler the times needed. He was a spoilt child whom the adulation of an old man had made wilful and

[1] See Irvine, William, *The Army of the Indian Moghuls* (London, 1903), p 300
[2] Sen, S. N., *The Military System of the Marathas* (1958 edition), pp. 72-73
[3] Thompson, V. M., *Dupleix and his Letters* (New York, 1933), p. 695
[4] Malcolm, J, *The Life of Robert Lord Clive*, Vol. II, pp. 120-121
[5] Hill, S. C., *Bengal in 1756-57*, Vol I, p. xxxii

vain. He had offended the high and the low by his rapacious, arbitrary and cruel dealings. He "came to his long-assigned throne in a house divided against itself, with a hostile faction in the army and a disaffected subject population."[1] His European detractors have painted his character in the blackest colours, but however indefensible his other measures may have been, he was more sinned against than sinning so far as the British were concerned.

In the quarrel which started between him and the agents of the East India Company in Calcutta, he was entirely in the right. They had not shown him the usual courtesy of acknowledging his accession to the throne. They had given unlawful shelter to a person fleeing from his justice, and had expelled from Calcutta—still under the sovereign authority of the Nawab of Bengal—his official. Worst of all, they had built fortifications at Calcutta and increased the strength of their garrison without asking his permission, in flagrant violation of the previous orders of Allahwardi Khan, who had told the French and the English, "you are merchants, what need have you of a fortress? Being under my protection you have no enemies to fear."[2]

The English tried to pacify his anger with apologies, but continued to prepare for defiance, at first with the hope of aid from the French and the Dutch, but failing that by increasing the army, laying in provisions and adding to the works of defence. Enraged by these proceedings, he hastened to Calcutta, stormed the outposts and took Fort William by assault. He, however, allowed the English governor to escape with his ships to Fulta, where he remained undisturbed till reinforcements arrived from Madras under Clive.

From a military point of view, there could not be a greater mistake than this, for in Fulta the English retained a rallying place from which to recover by means of naval forces the forts which they had lost on the river. With the arrival of Clive in Bengal with the Madras forces, the entire aspect of affairs changed. The Bengal factors had been pusillanimous, the memories of 1686-89 haunted them and the humility that characterised the letter of John Russell addressed to the Mughal emperor in 1712 still lingered.[3] But the victories in the

[1] Sarkar, Jadunath, *History of Bengal*, Vol. II, p 470

[2] *Ibid*, p. 452

[3] John Russell, the Governor of English Settlements in Bengal, wrote, "the supplication of John Russell who is as the minutest grain of sand, and whose forehead is the tip of his footstool who is absolute monarch and prop of the Universe, etc., etc.". See Ludlow, J. M., *British India, its Races and its History* (Cambridge 1858), Vol. I, p. 139

Deccan were a heady wine and consequently the letters of Watson and Clive to Siraj-ud-Daulah were full of fire and brimstone. Wrote Clive to the Nawab, "Your Excellency will hear from others what force is come to Bengal. Such a force was never seen before in your province. When Your Excellency comes to hear all those things and to consider seriously of them, I hope you will have so great a regard for yourself, for us, and for the trade of your province, as to give the Company full satisfaction for all the losses they have sustained."[1]

Watson had been even more outspoken, and without any diplomatic finesse, blurted out, "I will kindle such a flame in your country as all the water in the Ganges shall not be able to extinguish."[2] It is not necessary to retail the melancholy story of "fighting, tricks, chicanery, intrigues, politics and the Lord knows what"[3], by which Bengal passed into British subjection.

By the battle of Plassey in June 1757, Siraj-ud-Daulah was overthrown, and Mir Jafar Khan obligingly agreed to play the disgraceful role of "Colonel Clive's jackal", and the puppet of the Nawab of Bengal. Plassey started a long chain of consequences which utterly changed the face of India, the system of economy and government which had lasted for centuries was transformed.

Plassey transferred power, the battle of Buxar in 1764 created rights. The titular Mughal emperor granted a *farman* by which the Diwani (civil government) of the provinces of Bengal, Bihar and Orissa was conferred upon the Company. In the history of the Company the era of legitimate economic trade came to an end, and that of trade under the aegis of political power and with the help of State revenue was inaugurated. In the history of India it was the commencement of the operation of new social forces which had arisen in the far west and which were gradually to move across the oceans and the continents and encompass the whole earth.

Causes of English victory

It is an amazing fact of history that the agents of this great and irresistible force were largely unscrupulous, greedy, quarrelsome, envious men, and these bad bold adventurers had under their command the rank and file of their fellow countrymen, many of

[1] Hill, S. C., *Bengal in 1756-57*, Vol II, p 76
[2] *Ibid*, Vol I, p. clxu
[3] Clive's letter to Orme, see *ibid*, p cciii

whom were the veritable scum of the earth—criminals, renegades, half-castes and the riff-raff of all the races of Europe.[1] To quote Dupleix, "the Company sends out beggars as employees and officers who haven't a shirt to put on their backs."[2] One who had been an eye-witness, said after he had left Bombay, "I cannot without horror mention to what a pitch all vicious enormities were grown in this place. Their principles of action, and the consequent evil practices of the English, forwarded their miseries, and contributed to fill the air with those pestilential vapours that seized their vitals, and speeded their hasty passage to the other world. Luxury, immodesty, and a prostitute dissolution of manners, found still new matter to work upon."[3] Anderson adds, "all kinds of vice were in the superlative degree, and the most detestable sins were indulged in to an almost unlimited degree."[4] And further, "The Court of Directors must be called as witnesses to shew the prevalence of vice. Morals had become so corrupt that they were obliged to interfere, and in 1682 sent out most stringent orders that reformatory measures should immediately be enforced by authority. They remark with severe reprobation the 'riot, prodigality, carelessness and folly', which were so common. They were determined to check 'expensive and vicious habits.'"[5]

All that can be said in their favour is that the morals of their victims were no better. The Indian princes and aristocrats who opposed and fought the English were an unenviable lot. Dupleix described them as venal, cowardly, and unable "to grasp the first principles of governmental and diplomatic reliability."[6] The other terms he used for them were superstitious, vacillating, mutually suspicious, believing in the show of force and intimidation, caring for nothing but money, pleasure-loving, licentious. There may be malice and exaggeration in this judgement of an alien adventurer intent

[1] Keith describes Cornwallis' troops as follows· "His troops, though numerous, some 70,000 in all, were of very inferior quality especially as regards the 6,000 Europeans of the Company's army, the riff-raff of the London streets and the gleanings of the jails, officered by ruined youths or greedy seekers for money"—Keith, A B, *A Constitutional History of India*, 1600-1935 (second edition, 1937), p 104

[2] Dupleix to de Bacquencourt, February 15, 1753, quoted by Thompson, V M, in *Dupleix and His Letters* (New York, 1933), p 724

[3] Quoted by Anderson, P, *The English in Western India* (Bombay, 1854), p. 130

[4] *Ibid*, p. 130

[5] Letter from the Court to the Deputy Governor and Council of Bombay, dated May 1682, quoted by Anderson, P., *Ibid*, p 100

[6] See Thompson, V. M., *Dupleix and His Letters*, p 697

upon building an empire, but he is substantially vindicated by a sober Indian historian. Jadunath Sarkar characterises the Indian administration of the eighteenth century as hopelessly dishonest and inefficient, and the administrators as "a small, selfish, proud and unworthy ruling class." He uses for them such epithets as imbecile lechers and sadists. Under them "the purity of domestic life was threatened...Religion had become the handmaid of vice and folly."

There is little doubt that they were lacking in public morals and political wisdom. They had no conception of public virtue, no loyalty to the State, to the country or even to religion. They had not learnt to subordinate their personal interests to a great cause. But it would be unjust to charge them with any deficiency of spirit. Many of them were recklessly brave, indefatigable, resourceful, possessed of calm resignation and almost infinite capacity for suffering. They could be faithful to persons even unto death and sometimes heroic in their resolve to abide by their plighted word

They suffered humiliation and defeat not because they were personally less brave than the English or the French, nor even because their weapons and tactics were less effective. The British victory was not a triumph of virtue over vice, for the manners and morals of England in the eighteenth century, especially during its first moiety, were hardly exemplary.

George I and George II were no better than their counterparts in Delhi, Murshidabad, Poona or Hyderabad. Lord Chesterfield describes George I as lazy, inactive, coarse and lowly sensual, as one who liked the company of wags and buffoons, and doted on fat women. He had no love for England. George II seemed to be a less irascible edition of his father—dull, phlegmatic, time-serving—and his intellectual stature was summed up in his classic remark that he had no time for 'bainting and boetry'. Their Parliaments consisted of an office-seeking collection of jobbers, whose members were elected by corrupt pocket and rotten boroughs. The people of London were a rowdy crowd who paid scant respect to courtesy, law or order. Their insolent hooliganism made walking in the streets dangerous. "Fighting is delicious to our Englishmen", was the opinion of a contemporary. Gin drinking had assumed formidable proportions. Drunken young men committed all kinds of outrages. 'Mohocks', 'dancing masters', and 'tumblers' waylaid men and

women, beat them, cut noses, rolled matrons in barrels down Snow Hill and committed indecencies.

The constables were tipsy and inefficient. Horace Walpole reports the case of drunken policemen who shut up twenty-five or twenty-six men and women—beggars, a pregnant woman and tradesmen—in a round house in St. Martin's and kept them there screaming for water the whole night, with doors and windows closed. In the morning four were found stifled, two died later, and twelve were in a shocking state.

Thieves, robbers and highwaymen abounded. "One is forced to travel, even at noon, as if one were going to battle", wrote Walpole. Crime, smuggling, gambling, animal baiting, adultery and profligacy were common. Relations between the sexes were loose. Fleet marriages, that is "consent and cohabitation", were considered valid. Lecky says, "desertion, conjugal infidelity, bigamy, fictitious marriages celebrated by sham priests, were the natural and frequent consequences of the system."[1] Wives could be sold by auction.

Religious revivalism with its accompaniments, hysteria, madness and asceticism, belief in miracles, witchcraft, and theological dissension, were rampant. Antinomian tendencies were strong.

In short, neither the England nor the India of the eighteenth century presented an agreeable picture of social conditions. But the English were superior in one respect: they had developed a sense of nationalism and had acquired discipline and organisation, which Indians lacked.

The conquest of Bengal by the English is unprecedented in the history of the world. Those who directed the conquest were mere merchants of a trading corporation who had no experience of wars and warlike operations. Many of their commanders were men from the clerical establishments who either volunteered or were pitchforked into soldiering. The people whom they conquered were neither like the primitive savages of Africa and Australia, nor like the semi-civilised Red Indians of America. India boasted of an ancient and highly evolved civilisation, of an empire rich and famed over the world for its cultural achievements. Its manifold crafts and splendid arts manifested skills superior to those of the West. In philosophy, religion and literature, it was unsurpassed. But in science, technics,

[1] Lecky, W. E. H., *A History of England in the Eighteenth Century*, Vol. I, p. 491; Also Phillips, R. H., *Georgian Scrap-book*

industry and politics the West had undoubtedly forged ahead. Yet in the eighteenth century the difference was not great.

The conquest was peculiar in another sense. It was achieved wholly at the expense of the conquered, for the Company did not contribute a penny towards the expense of war and conquest. It was remarkable also because the instruments of the conquest were largely supplied by the conquered. In the Deccan wars (1744-54) the Madras army consisted of 300 English soldiers and three to four thousand Indians—Christians, Muslims and Hindus. Clive commanded at Plassey a force of 950 English infantry and 150 artillery and 2,100 Indian sepoys, partly Telingas and partly north Indians—Pathans, Jats, Rajputs and Brahmanas.

It is difficult to find a parallel to a victory won so cheaply. At Plassey the British losses were 7 Europeans and 16 sepoys killed and 13 Europeans and 36 sepoys wounded. The gain was dominion over the richest province of India—a vast territory yielding a revenue of over twenty-five and a half million rupees a year, and inhabited by nearly thirty million people.

Plassey placed at the disposal of English discipline and organisation, the vast resources of Bengal. Their prestige shot up so high as to place them among the most serious claimants to the inheritance of the Mughals. Luckily for them, the crushing defeat of the Marathas at Panipat, and the subsequent developments of internal dissensions among them, and the death of Ahmad Shah Abdali followed by anarchy in Afghanistan, removed the two most formidable rivals from their path.

The battle of Buxar made the British the lawful government of Bengal. It bound the Nawab of Oudh in an alliance which secured the western frontiers of Bengal. It reduced the emperor to the status of a pensioner, and ruled out for ever the recovery of the Mughal empire.

Dupleix was never tired of preaching the virtue of patience. The British practised it. They were equally convinced of the virtue of economy, for again the French had provided ample warning. The British held the French business methods in contempt, because they were uneconomic. They regarded the French establishment in India as "a pretty little church to hear Mass". So after 1765, they thought they had gone far enough, and what they needed was the consolidation of their conquest and augmentation of their profits. The Court

of Directors wrote to their agents in India, "It is not for the Company to take the part of unifiers of Indostan. . . . We wish to see the Indian princes remain as a check upon one another without our interfering."

Further conquests and expansion of dominion

But having entered into the political whirlpool of India, withdrawal was impossible. The British interests were centred in three regions—on the west coast round Bombay, in the south-eastern coast about Madras and in north-eastern India about Calcutta. Bombay was completely surrounded by the Maratha dominions and Bombay's fortunes were affected by the politics of the Maratha rulers. The British possessions in the south were contiguous to the spheres of three governments—the Marathas, the Mysoreans and the Nizam. These three were constantly changing their alliances and forming different combinations. In order to preserve their newly-won territories and to prevent encroachments upon them, the British were involved in the quarrels of these powers, especially when the French befriended any of them in order to extirpate their rivals.

In the north, the Mughal empire had lost all force, but the prestige of its name still counted. Over the possession of its body there raged a fierce contest whose noise reverberated through the latter part of the eighteenth century. Among the contenders the two principal ones were the Afghans and the Marathas, but there were a number of others who played subsidiary roles. Their kaleidoscopic changes of sides made this tragic drama an extraordinarily complex affair. The Rohilla chiefs and the Nawabs of Oudh were often fighting for influence over the court of Delhi. The Rajputs and the Jats, and before the end of the century the Sikhs, were taking a hand in the game. Their intrigues and conspiracies, plots and counterplots, campaigns and raids, were spreading insecurity and chaos all round. The British, who had brought the lower Doab under their sphere of influence, watched this mad carousal from across the border and bided their time.

Notwithstanding the instructions of the Court of Directors, there were almost continuous wars in which the Presidencies of Madras, Bombay and Bengal were involved either as principals or auxiliaries. There were many reasons for this. Madras and Bombay were keen upon emulating the achievement of Calcutta. Each desired to expand its revenue and therefore to extend the territory under its control. All

dreaded concerted action among Indian chiefs and wished to maintain the balance of power among them. The Indian chiefs were jealous of one another and without foreseeing the consequences of their selfishness played the game of the Company and invited its support in their wars. Since the end of the Seven Years War, the French were seeking an opportunity for revenge. They took every advantage of the difficulties of the British to destroy their empire and its far-flung trade. When the American colonies started the War of Independence, France rushed to their support across the Atlantic, and, in order to embarrass the English, sent troops to India in aid of Hyder Ali and Tipu Sultan. The negotiations of the French with the Indian chiefs and the presence of French officers in their armies were regarded by the Company as signs of hostility. They maintained a careful watch over all such moves and took measures to forestall them. In this process, one by one, the chiefs were destroyed or subjugated, and ultimately the whole of India was brought under British control.

The Nizam

The process had two phases. In its first phase the powers of the Deccan were dealt with; in the second, the British flag was carried forward to the natural frontiers of India. In the Deccan there were three principal powers—the Nizam, the Sultans of Mysore, and the Marathas. Of these the Nizam was the weakest and his policy the most vacillating. Till the end of the Seven Years War the Nizam was under French influence. Then he entered into an alliance with the British. After his defeat by the Marathas at Kharda in 1795, he again turned to the French. But Wellesley easily persuaded him to enter into a subsidiary alliance in 1798. Thus he exchanged his independence for security guaranteed by a largely Indian army, officered by the British, and maintained at his own expense.

Mysore

The Sultans of Mysore, Hyder Ali and Tipu proved much harder nuts to crack. They defied the British and their allies—the Nizam and the Marathas. They fought four valiant wars. In the first, Hyder Ali was victorious and dictated peace under the walls of Madras. In the second war (1780-84), he received some reinforcements from the French, who sent 2,000 soldiers under Bussy; and the

French Admiral Suffren kept the British fleet on the run. But the French withdrew when peace was signed between England and France in 1783, and the second Mysore war came to an end with the restoration of the position before the war, by the Treaty of Mangalore. However, in the third war which Cornwallis forced upon Tipu Sultan by violating the treaty and pursuing "a course, which was perhaps not only questionable in point of faith; but which must have been more offensive to Tipoo Sultaun, and more calculated to produce a war with that prince, than an avowed contract of a defensive engagement framed for the express and legitimate purpose of limiting his inordinate ambition,"[1] Tipu suffered reverses and the British army approached his capital, Seringapatam. He purchased peace by ceding half of his kingdom. In the fourth war, British gold effected what British guns had so far failed to accomplish. The ministers betrayed the master. Tipu refused to surrender[2], and died bravely fighting in defence of his fort. The dynasty was extinguished and the old Hindu family was restored to a much reduced kingdom, with the status of a feudatory vassal of the British. The Nizam was recompensed with accession of territory as a reward for the part he had played against Tipu Sultan.

The Marathas

The downfall of the Marathas was brought about by their own insensate dissensions, inordinate folly, and criminal self-seeking. They seemed to suffer from suicidal schizophrenia. The first war between the Marathas and the British was the result of the ambitions of Raghunath Rao, the uncle of the fourth and fifth Peshwas, Madhav Rao and Narayan Rao. Madhav Rao died of a wasting disease and Narayan Rao was done to death because of female jealousies and palace intrigues. Raghunath Rao claimed the gaddi. But the birth of a posthumous son to Narayan Rao deprived him of the coveted prize. So he signed away Maratha independence by the Treaty of Surat, in 1775, in order to become the puppet Peshwa. The British were only too eager to avail of such an opportunity of acquiring power. However, the attempt proved premature. The Maratha confederacy had not yet lost its coherence, and capable and moderate counsellors like Mahadji Sindhia could still exercise

[1] Malcolm, J, *Sketch of the Political History of India* (London, 1811), p 69
[2] Muhibbul Hasan Khan, *History of Tipu Sultan*, pp 324-29

influence. Thus in the war that ensued laurels were shared equally. The British suffered ignominies, but their prestige was restored by the march of Goddard across central India and the defeats of Sindhia. The war was concluded by the Treaty of Salbai, in 1782.

For the British there was no gain of territory, but they came out of the war stronger than before. They fought the first Maratha war in a period when their fortunes were at the lowest ebb. They were losing their dominion in America, and their European rivals were fully exploiting their distress. In India the Company's affairs were not running smoothly. The governors of the Presidencies wanted to follow their own policies irrespective of the wishes of the central authority in Calcutta. In Calcutta the Regulating Act had created a difficult situation, for the members of the Council thwarted the policies of the Governor General. Nor were the finances in a satisfactory condition. It is to the credit of Warren Hastings that he overcame all dangers, and safeguarded British interests in a most critical situation. Never afterwards did a menace of such proportions threaten them in India.

The second Maratha war started in circumstances similar to those of the first. This time the villain of the piece was Raghunath Rao's worthless son, Peshwa Baji Rao II. He had espoused the cause of Sindhia in the eternal contest between Sindhia and Holkar. The latter defeated the combination and occupied Poona. Baji Rao fled to the protection of the British. The Governor General, Lord Wellesley, had made up his mind to stand out as the paramount power in India. He welcomed Baji Rao and made him sign the Treaty of Bassein accepting the status of a British subsidiary in 1802. The Peshwa's action was a challenge to the other Maratha chiefs. Unfortunately, though certain destruction stood facing them, they were blinded by ancient feuds and jealousies. They refused to combine. Sindhia and Bhonsle bore the brunt of the British attack, while the Gaekwad remained neutral and Holkar sulked. The result was a foregone conclusion. The British engaged the Marathas in the Deccan and in Hindustan. Their Deccan forces under Arthur Wellesley (later Duke of Wellington) won decisive victories at Assaye and Argaon, and they captured Ahmadnagar, Burhanpur, Asirgarh and Gawilgarh. In Hindustan, Lake took possession of Aligarh and Delhi, and routed Sindhia's army at Laswari. The Maratha

chiefs had to sue for peace, surrender great portions of their territories, and accept British overlordship.

Holkar would have paid for his folly heavily, but Lord Wellesley was recalled and his successors let him off with lenient terms.

The Marathas were defeated, reduced to British vassalage, and isolated from one another. Although the humiliation rankled, they had not learnt wisdom from their failure. They were unable to analyse the true causes of their discomfiture. They had neither the patience to rebuild their shattered State, nor the prudence and skill to plan a concerted effort to retrieve some of the ground they had lost to a clever and powerful enemy. They had recourse to intrigue, but traitors among them kept the British well informed of their movements. The situation worsened as the years went by, but Wellesley's wars and conquests had strained the Company's finances and the Directors in alarm had decided upon a policy of non-intervention.

But within a decade of Wellesley's recall, the British were again ready for a fresh advance. The Marquis of Hastings came out as the Governor General in 1813, and gave marching orders. The Maratha resistance was feeble and was overcome easily. The Maratha State ceased to exist. British ascendancy over the Deccan and the greater part of northern India was established by 1818.

The next phase of the expansion of British dominion saw the extinction of Indian independence throughout the country from the Himalayas to the seas. Sind and the Panjab were conquered, Oudh and the Central Provinces were annexed, and a number of small pockets of Indian rule were wiped out.

Sind

Sind had the misfortune of being divided and weak. It had powerful neighbours—the Afghans on the north whose tributaries they had been since the days of Ahmad Shah Abdali, and the Sikhs who were masters of the Upper Indus and desired to control the river down to its mouth on the sea. The British had occupied territories up to the banks of the Satluj and they had their own designs. The advance of Russia into the heart of Central Asia was regarded by them as a tocsin of danger. It was necessary to insulate Afghanistan, and with Ranjit Singh straddling the Panjab, the only approach to the mountain kingdom was through Sind. So for

the sake of the safety and integrity of the empire, Sind was sacrificed. Napier, the self-willed conqueror, felt no shame in admitting the laconic and world famous despatch which *Punch* had fathered to describe his exploit, viz. *Peccavi* (I have sin'd).

Panjab

In the Panjab, so long as Ranjit Singh lived, he had the good sense not to provoke the British, because he had a correct estimate of their strength. But no sooner did his strong and statesmanlike guidance cease than forces of chaos and disorder were let loose. Suspicion, jealousy and passion held sway, and wanton murder and bloodshed stalked the land. Soon the military began to interfere in the affairs of the State. Unfortunately, though the Khalsa was brave, it was too easily swayed by religious sentiment, and was apt to rush into action without weighing the consequences, specially when *nihangs* and *pujaris* dominated their counsels, as they indeed did at this critical juncture. Self-seeking, corrupt leaders took advantage of these weaknesses. In order to gain their ends, the different parties made frequent appeals to the Committee of the Army (Panch Khalsa).

Soon the army began to domineer over the government. Those who had raised the Frankenstein now took fright lest they might lose their offices. The position was that a child, Dalip Singh, was the occupant of the throne. His mother, Rani Jindan Kaur, was the regent, and her paramour Lal Singh, Chief Minister, and her favourite Tej Singh, Commander-in-Chief. All three were utterly base and wicked, wholly unworthy of the positions they occupied. All three hated the Khalsa and plotted its overthrow.

They made secret overtures to the English, who were already seeking an opportunity to intervene in the affairs of the Panjab. Having become the masters of practically the whole of India, it was impossible not to be interested in the province which possessed such strategical importance. A well organised, orderly and powerful government could not be expected to remain a mere spectator when anarchy in its neighbouring state invited interference. It was obvious that if the British refrained, Afghanistan would not keep quiet and behind it the Russian steamroller was advancing remorselessly. The power vacuum which the Sikh internecine strife was creating could not remain unfilled for long.

There were many indications of British intentions. Among them were the occupation of Ferozepur and its conversion into a cantonment for the residence of British troops, the stationing of troops at Ambala and in the hills close to the Sikh frontier, the assembling of a bridge of boats on the Satluj, and the proposal to hand over Peshawar to Amir Dost Muhammad Khan. These hostile measures were bound to create apprehensions in the minds of the Sikhs. The attitude of Major Broadfoot, the British agent for the affairs of the Sikhs, was provocative. He openly declared that the cis-Satluj possessions of the Lahore Government were liable to escheat on the death or deposition of Maharaja Dalip Singh.[1]

The Sikh army was thus fully convinced that the British wanted to annex the Panjab. Lal Singh and Tej Singh played upon their fears, and raised their feelings to the highest pitch of excitement. In this state they heard that the British had sequestrated some Sikh villages near Ludhiana and that the British Governor General was marching towards their frontiers. The cup was filled to the brim. On December 11, 1845, the Sikh troops crossed the Satluj and war began. But it was a war in which "the enthusiastic unity of purpose in the army headed by men not only ignorant of warfare, but studiously treacherous towards their followers, was conspicuously visible."[2] Battles were fought and prodigies of valour performed by the rank and file, but foul betrayal and shameless treason of the leaders neutralised the heroism of the soldiers. Lahore fell into British hands. The Panjab lost its independence, but the simulacrum of a Sikh State was allowed to continue.

The Sikhs had suffered defeat but had not lost hope of retrieving their position. A second war ensued (1849), but the story of the first war was repeated. According to Malleson, "No troops could have fought better than the Sikhs fought, no army could have been worse led." As a result even the semblance of the State ceased to exist. The Panjab was annexed to British India. The structure which the creative genius of a Sikh had built up with soldierly enterprise and statesmanlike ability was laid in ruins, because of the depravity and malevolence of his disreputable successors.

Within a hundred years from Plassey the whole of India had been forced to accept the British yoke. It was, from the military point of

[1] Cunningham, J D., *A History of the Sikhs* (edited by Garrett and Sethi, 1955), p. 252
[2] *Ibid*, p. 264

view, a curious achievement. For in all the battles fought the fighters were predominantly Indian. The composition of the army of an Indian chief was not very different from that of the East India Company. The Indian chief's army consisted of a small contingent of European soldiers led by European officers, especially in the artillery arm, a quota of varying strength of European-trained Indian infantry, and a large number of Indian horse and foot fighting according to traditional ways. The army of the Company consisted of a contingent of European soldiers and an Indian infantry force trained by Europeans; the third element, the untrained trooper, was absent or formed an unimportant auxiliary force. Thus the forces of Indian princes, under the command of European and Indian officers, fought against the Company's forces consisting of European and Indian soldiers under European and Indian commanders. The difference between them was that the European officers and other ranks were not as loyal and steadfast in the service of their Indian masters as the Indians were under their European commanders.

The equipment of the antagonists was not dissimilar. The weapons were guns, muskets, matchlocks, rockets and cannon, apart from the traditional arms, swords, spears, bows and arrows.

Yet the difference in the morale of the two was profound. The Indians were new to firearms; they had not acquired the mastery of their tactical use. They could not easily replace losses in guns and ammunition because of lack of knowledge of science. They had to depend upon foreigners, who were unreliable. The European officers in their service were mercenaries and adventurers. In the earlier days they fought for the Indian chiefs because they thought they were thus helping the cause of their nation. But when the Napoleonic wars came to a close, the demobilised and denationalised European soldiers entered the service of the Indian princes merely for the sake of building up private fortunes. Some of them fought well because of their sense of a soldier's honour. But many deserted their masters when hopes of victory dwindled.

In tactics and strategy the British were far superior to the Indians. But this difference cannot be considered decisive. Tactics can be learnt within a short time; what cannot be acquired easily is morale. It was here that the fatal weakness of the Indian side lay. Many a battle was lost because the common soldiers were dissatisfied; either their pay was in arrears or they had not been treated well.

One great national weakness of the Indian side was financial mismanagement and consequent embarrassment of governments, and irregularity in disbursing the pay of the troops.

The Indian soldier was not a coward. On many occasions, although suffering from great handicaps, he gave ample proof of his bravery, endurance and resoluteness. The Indian sepoys who fought under British commanders showed in every fight high soldierly qualities. No, the defect lay in the quality of Indian leadership. The soldier fought for the person of his master, for the salt; but what inspired the master to fight ? He fought for no conceivable cause beyond the interest of his own person or that of his family. This was not a sufficiently strong foundation to sustain morale against men who, however deficient in personal conduct and morality, were seldom known to sacrifice the interests of their country for preserving their own. The defeat of a British general was only a temporary setback of an individual. He was an expendable commodity replaceable by another. On the other hand, the defeat of an Indian chief involved the overthrow of the whole policy. Plassey meant the end of the Bengal Government; Seringapatam that of the Mysore state; Assaye shattered Sindhia's power, Argaon that of Bhonsle, Mehidpur of Holkar and Khirki of Baji Rao, the Peshwa. The Sikh State was prostrated at Aliwal and Sobraon, and then wholly uprooted at the battle of Gujrat.

On the reverse, the victories of Hyder Ali, "like an avalanche, carrying destruction with him", or the success of the Maratha arms in the Western Ghats, compelling the British commander to sign the humiliating convention of Wadgaon, or the repulse of Lake before Bharatpur, or the punishments inflicted by the Sikhs on the British forces at Mudki and Ferozshah, reducing them to a "critical and perilous state", and at Chillianwala, where British columns and guns were captured, were temporary episodes, which had no effect upon the final issue.

The moral is clear. In the Indian case the State was incorporated in the person who led the army. His failure implied the collapse of the State. Nor was there one State commanding the loyalty and allegiance of the whole country. India was a medley of warring chiefs, a house divided against itself, one army contending against another, and making no distinction in its blindness between Indian and foreigner. Behind the English commander stood the nation

which might suffer mishaps with effects lasting for a shorter or longer period, but which could not be exterminated by defeat. India had to wait for over a century before similar relations between the individual and the State could develop, and the consciousness arise that the claim of the nation has priority over the claim of the individual.

CHAPTER SEVEN

THE DEVELOPMENT OF BRITISH ADMINISTRATION UP TO 1793

India on the eve of Plassey

The conquest of Bengal and the transfer of power into the hands of the East India Company created a situation which had no parallel in the history of India. India had suffered conquests in the past, but at the hands of Asian conquerors who in outlook and culture shared common traits with the people of India and lived under similar sociological conditions. Their conquests amounted largely to a change in the ruling personnel, but little change in the social system or the economy of the country. Even the political organisation and the administrative arrangements of the two did not differ fundamentally. So far as culture is concerned, to the variety which existed in the country some new features were added. The early Muslim conquerors brought with them new languages—Persian and Arabic; a new religion--Islam; a new style in art; and some new crafts. They also introduced some of their manners and customs, ways of eating and dressing. There was no radical modification in the country's economy—in agriculture, industry or commerce. The economy of the village retained its ancient pattern. The rigidity of the social organisation was accentuated. Even the Muslims came under its influence and succumbed to caste-like social distinctions. On the other hand, under the influence of Islam, many Hindu reformers appeared who denounced the caste system.

The traditional political pattern

Political power and its basis and support—the army—remained in the hands of the conquerors, but the machinery of administration and especially the financial system continued largely to be run by the Hindus.

When the Mughals came, they established a more centralised form of administration. They created opportunities for the development of a uniform culture, which led to the reduction of tribal and regional diversities and the emergence of a sense of unity. Their policy concerning land-revenue administration gave a strong impulse to the forces of consolidation. Their patronage of literature and art

brought about a cultural renaissance, and their attitude towards religion tended to obliterate mutual differences and to foster among all classes and communities loyalty towards the head of the State.

But the Indian mind did not move out of the old ruts and refused to break with the authoritarian ways of thinking. Hindu and Muslim thinkers continued to chew and rechew the cud of ancient philosophies, laws, sciences and religious doctrines. No new sciences were cultivated. Even the rudimentary principles of chemistry, physics, botany, zoology, anatomy and physiology were scarcely known. Scientific experimentation, objective observation, testing of hypotheses in the study of nature were not dreamed of.

The cult of personality dominated all departments of society. The State was the person of the ruler. It was not the sovereign principle embodying the collective will of society. Loyalty to the State was owing to the person of the monarch: it was fragile and easily shattered. The personalistic State was inevitably unstable, incapable of withstanding storms and stresses. Its anchor did not hold in adversity.

The political bonds of society were weak. The claims of neighbourhood, the bonds of territorial patriotism and the love of the motherland had no validity. As a compensation, the relations based on consanguinity and kinship were exceedingly strong. What was the gain of the kinship was the loss of the territorial society. The role of religion in society was equally subversive, for religion obstructed the emergence of social fusion and national unity. Allegiance to religion required obedience to the polity of fellow worshippers and negatived the concept of a secular or a multi-religious State. Law was the adjunct of the faith of a person and not the juristic habit of a territorial group. The legal process depended upon the status of a person, and not upon the subject-matter of the law concerned. The cake of custom encrusted practice. Occupations and professions were determined by birth and not by choice or fitness. Marriage had scarcely any element of companionship of freedom and of romance. It was a plan for the perpetuation of the race. Diplomacy and statecraft were a display of the virtuosity of persons rather than of argument and calculation, of the weighing of pros and cons, of the relating of causes and consequences. A mystic, subjective, other-worldly attitude constituted the mainspring of the individual's conduct. It tended to blur the sense of precise

and clear definition and to promote laxity and indeterminateness.

Thus the practical life of India was characterised by a certain misty nonchalance, a reliance upon instinct rather than reason in the solution of vital problems. It is not surprising that the State documents of the eighteenth century, ample as they are, do not contain any written minutes of discussions of policy, or any written instructions to embassies, or any estimates of the annual revenue and disbursements of the State. Orme noted that, "in affairs of consequence nothing, except in the most equivocal terms, is ever given by them (the Indian rulers) in writing."[1] The written letters, political and diplomatic, which have survived are examples of woolly and turgid writing in which the meaning is hidden behind pompous verbiage. It is said that writing makes for exactitude. This quality seems to have been deliberately avoided by Indian diplomats in favour of oral deliberation and instruction with all its possibilities of vagueness and varied interpretations. The Indian, on the whole, was docile, submissive, patient, more ready to yield than to fight. In the eighteenth century, he was more than usually egotistical, short-sighted, demoralized, neither true to himself nor to others.

Plassey and after

The defeat at Plassey exposed all the Indian weaknesses. It brought the richest and the fairest region of India under the foreigner's yoke. It worked a sudden and radical transformation in the relations of Englishmen and Indians. From a suppliant for favours the Englishman had become a dispenser of boons. Clive struck the first note of truculence in his correspondence with the Nawab of Bengal. Victory made Clive's countrymen insufferably arrogant, overbearing, and cruel. It accentuated ugly traits of character and instigated self-assertion among the members of the conquering race.

Plassey created a most anomalous situation in Bengal. The conquered country was left without a master. The Nawab was shorn of all authority. The East India Company was far away, and in any case it was a commercial concern not organised for the exercise of political and administrative functions. The Government of England was hardly aware of what the Company's agents were doing and little conscious of its responsibilities towards the conquered people.

[1] See *A History of the Military Transactions of the British Nation in Hindostan*, Vol I, p 59

"Power", Lecky observes, "was practically monopolised by a great multitude of isolated officials,....far removed from all control, and commanding great bodies of disciplined sepoys."[1]

Some of the officials were "desperate adventurers of broken fortunes and tarnished honour". They had come to India "at a time when very few even of the best Europeans would have considered themselves bound to apply the whole moral law to men of a pagan creed and of a colour differing from their own."[2] The depredations of these men were not unlike the effects of a swarm of locusts settling upon a rich green field. Says Lecky, "whole districts which had once been populous and flourishing were at last utterly depopulated, and it was noticed that on the appearance of a party of English merchants the villages were at once deserted, and the shops shut, and the roads thronged with panic-stricken refugees."[3]

No moral scruples deterred these greedy officials of the Company from gathering wealth. "Never before had the natives experienced a tyranny which was at once so skilful, so searching and so strong."[4] The writers, factors and merchants of the Company had suddenly become officials with enormous powers. They were paid meagre salaries and were permitted to supplement them by private trade. The conquest of Bengal offered them a golden opportunity. They used their powers to drive their Indian and other rivals out of the trade. They refused to pay customs and transit dues, sold their exemptions to Indians for large sums, intimidated Indian functionaries, prohibited other traders from dealing in goods they sold themselves, coerced the villagers to purchase their goods at exorbitant prices, and to sell their own to them at cheap rates. They monopolised trade in the primary necessaries of life and charged famine prices for them. They employed other methods too to swell their incomes. They imposed fines, collected taxes and lent money to the impecunious and improvident Indian nobles and chiefs at exorbitant rates of interest. They practised extortion, jobbery and bribery. Mir Qasim complained to the English Governor and his Council in May 1762 that, "this is the way your Gentlemen behave; they make a disturbance all over my country, plunder the people, injure and disgrace

[1] Lecky, W. E. H., *A History of England in the Eighteenth Century* (new impression), Vol IV, p 262

[2] *Ibid*

[3] *Ibid*, p 264

[4] *Ibid*

my servants.... Setting up the colours and showing the passes of the Company, they use their utmost endeavours to oppress the peasants, merchants, and other people of the country.... In every village and in every factory they buy and sell salt, betel-nut, rice, straw, bamboos, fish, gunnies, ginger, sugar, tobacco, opium, and many other things.... They forcibly take away the goods and commodities of the peasants, merchants, etc., for a fourth part of their value, and by ways of violence and oppression they oblige the peasants to give five rupees for goods which are worth but one rupee; and for the sake of five rupees they bind and disgrace a man who pays a hundred rupees in land-tax; and they allow not any authority to my servants."[1]

For his pains to protect his subjects and fight against the evils perpetrated by the Company's servants, Mir Qasim was so hard pressed that he lost his patience and was provoked to violence and war, but was ultimately defeated and forced into exile.

The higher officials—the Governors, the Generals, the Councillors, etc., made enormous fortunes from presents exacted from Indian princes and officials who looked to their favours for the positions they coveted and occupied. James Mill gives an account of the sums distributed by the princes and other natives of Bengal from the year 1757 to the year 1766. The total amount reaches the staggering figure of approximately six million pounds sterling or six crores of rupees.[2] This is exclusive of the jagir of Clive which secured for him the enormous revenue of £30,000 per annum. Clive returned to England at the age of thirty-four, with a fortune of more than £40,000 a year, and a sum of £50,000 for his relatives.[3]

The rank and file among the servants of the Company made their own piles. They looked upon their temporary sojourn in the country as a rare opportunity to enrich themselves without the least concern for the fate of the people. The Directors were constrained to admit, "We think the vast fortunes acquired in the inland trade have been obtained by a series of the most tyrannic and oppressive conduct that ever was known in any age or country."[4]

The prospects of wealth easily and rapidly acquired excited the

[1] Woodruff, Philip, *The Men who Ruled India*. *The Founders*, p 106
[2] Mill and Wilson, *The History of British India* (fifth edition), Vol III, pp. 257-60
[3] Lecky, W E. H, *A History of England in the Eighteenth Century*, Vol IV, p 263; Malcolm, Sir John, *Life of Robert Lord Clive*, Vol II (London, 1836)
[4] Mill and Wilson, *The History of British India* (fifth edition), Vol. III, p. 279

cupidity of other Englishmen. The proprietors of the Company and influential persons forced the Company to employ their young relatives and friends in their lucrative service. Covetous men advertised in the English press offering a thousand guineas for procuring a writer's place in Bengal.

A vast expansion of the official establishment took place, and these highly connected young fortune-hunters were placed in charge of the destinies of millions of Indians. Their one aim in life was to shake the pagoda tree and return home laden with wealth while still in their prime. Writes Keith,[1] "the effect of the demands ...was that the fine country which had flourished under the most despotic and arbitrary government was verging to its ruin when the English had so great a share in the administration."

The spirit of greed let loose by Clive affected all sections of English society. The proprietors of the Company clamoured for higher dividends. In 1767, the rate was raised to ten per cent and in 1771 it was proposed to enhance it to twelve and a half per cent. Even the Ministers and the Parliament of England were infected. "The idea that India could be made to pay off the National Debt was extraordinarily captivating, and was bound up with current exaggerated notions of Oriental wealth. Clive had written to Pitt that the Bengal conquest could 'in time' be used for this purpose, and Beckford thought that 'the East' might become a source of direct revenue. A pamphleteer maintained that India under the direct government of the Crown would yield sufficient profit to discharge the debt."[2]

It is estimated that almost two million pounds passed every year in the form of tribute from the Company to the British Government. Lecky writes, "without a shadow of authority in the terms of the charter or in the letter of the law, the ministers had raised a distinction between the territorial revenue and the trade revenue of the Company. By threatening the former they had extorted, in addition to the legitimate duties which had been paid into the Imperial exchequer, no less than 400,000 pounds a year, at a time when the finances of the Company were altogether unable to bear the exaction. This tribute, which was the true origin of the bankruptcy of the Company, was purely extortionate. In one form or another it was computed

[1] Keith, A. B., *A Constitutional History of India* (second edition, 1937), p 57
[2] Holzman, J. M., *The Nabobs in England* (New York, 1926), p. 21

that little less than two million sterling had, of late, passed annually from the Company to the Government."[1]

"Clive had debauched the Company, Chatham was concerned lest he should debauch the nation." The danger was real. In the latter half of the eighteenth century, public morality was at its lowest ebb in England. Corruption was rampant. Pocket and rotten borroughs from which members of Parliament were returned were a saleable commodity. The kings and leaders of parties were eager to purchase them and hence they were anxious to extort large sums of money from the Company. Equally the rich servants of the Company who had returned as 'nabobs' were keen upon building up influence in the legislature. An illustration of these tendencies was the general election of 1768 in which as many as twenty-one of them were returned. "The new Parliament was a true gathering together of the nabobs."[2] There were four Clives among them. The others were men who had played a prominent part in the recent events in India.

Was England going the way the Roman Empire went when proconsuls dominated the senate and transformed the republic into an empire ? The ancient liberties of England won by generations of suffering and sacrifice were at stake.

The acquisition of a vast and populous territory presented constitutional and legal problems of extreme complexity. The East India Company was a commercial body, a creation of the Government of England. It exercised functions and rights which were derived from charters granted by the head of the State. Could it assume sovereign powers over an area of more than 150,000 square miles and a population of thirty million inhabitants when the mother-country (Great Britain and Ireland) was no larger than 120,000 square miles in extent and inhabited by about nine million people[3], without threatening an upheaval in the political system of the country? An *imperium in imperio* is always dangerous, especially when it is exercised by a closed oligarchy of unscrupulous, profiteering members of the merchant class.

The power which the Company acquired over the province of Bengal was abused shamelessly, so that the thirty years after Plassey

[1] Lecky, *op. cit.*, Vol. IV, p. 279-280
[2] Davies, A. Mervyn, *Clive of Plassey* (1939), p. 462
[3] Clapham, J. H., *An Economic History of Modern Britain*, Vol. I, Chapter IV:—
Population in 1751 was 7,250,000
" " 1781 was 9,250,000
" " 1801 was 10,943,000.

constitute a most tragic and a most ignominious period in the annals of the country. From 1757 to 1765 Bengal was held up to plunder on a vast scale as a conquered land towards whose residents the conqueror had no responsibility or obligation. Nawabs were made and unmade without scruple and every occasion was seized to extort enormous presents for the high officials of the Company—the President, the members of the Council and the army chiefs. The smaller fry swept the districts. In 1765, the Diwani of the three provinces of Bengal, Bihar and Orissa was acquired, and the next seven years saw the functioning of the dual system of government established by Clive. The transfer of control over the economy of the region into the hands of the Company was a vast and fateful change. The factors and merchants of a trading corporation were converted overnight into administrators and statesmen entrusted to decide questions of extreme complexity which were pregnant with unforeseen and unlimited possibilities. Unfortunately, they had little knowledge of Indian land-systems and property relations. In the circumstances, they applied the English political and economic concepts with which they were acquainted, to entirely different conditions prevailing in India.

In the first few years, the Company lacked the courage to assume the responsibilities inherent in the transfer of the Diwani, and attempted to maintain the facade of their subordination to Indian authority. They acted behind the screen of Mughal sovereignty.[1]

During this period real power was exercised under an arrangement which left the appearance of authority to the puppet Indian

[1] In theory the Mughal emperor continued to be the sovereign, right up to the passing of Pitt's India Bill in 1784 The extent to which this doctrine received the adherence of the Company's servants in 1769 may be gathered from the words of a letter in which Governor Harry Verelst bade farewell to the Members of his Council:

"There is a rock, and a dangerous one, which requires the greatest circumspection to avoid We have stepped forth beyond all former precedent or example We have the best and most laudable of all arguments to justify our conduct. But it should be remembered that we have reached that supreme line, which, to pass, would be an open avowal of sovereignty. It should be remembered that we cannot be more, without being greater than sound policy allows, the interests of our employers at home, no less than our national connections abroad, forbid it If we were before the change, cautious of interfering with the native government, and of awakening the jealousy of foreign nations, we ought now to redouble our prudence The change itself, supposing the greatest forbearance on our parts, has been an unavoidable tendency to destroy the name of the Nizamut, by which means, what might have been the happiest event for the Company and the Nation, may become the source of perplexities and jealousies. There is, however, a middle way where moderation must guide and continue us; where we may walk with safety, advantage and consistence, without danger of too much confinement or too much liberty. Exteriors should be regarded as essentials Every order should scrupulously wear the sanction of the native government" (Verelst, *View*, etc., Appendix, p 123; Firminger, *Fifth Report*, Vol I, p xi)

ruler, while keeping the sovereign power in the hands of the Company. The responsibility for the maintenance of peace and order was that of the Nawab, but he depended both for funds and forces upon the Company in whose employ was the effective army and at whose disposal were the revenues of the provinces. The Company did not disturb even the collection of land-revenue for it continued to be made on the basis of the old assessment. The treasury remained at Murshidabad. A Naib-Diwan was appointed, ostensibly under the Nawab but really responsible to the Company, to superintend and control the revenue collection.

These arrangements proved unsatisfactory. The rapacity of the Company combined with the villainy of its servants turned Bengal into a scene of chaos and anarchy. The result was the terrible famine of 1769-70, which destroyed one-third of the population.[1] Hunter quotes a contemporary who states, "The scene of misery that intervened, and still continues, shocks humanity too much to bear description. Certain it is that in several parts the living have fed on the dead."[2] Yet the Company remitted only five per cent of the land-tax in the year of famine and in the following year added ten per cent to the assessment "to make good at the expense of the living the losses involved in the wholesale depopulation".

The Company resorted to these inhuman measures because the conquest of Bengal had excited the cupidity of its shareholders who demanded higher dividends and greater investments, and also of the Ministry of England who claimed a share in the loot. Both regarded India as an El Dorado. Both desired to participate in its inexhaustible treasures of gold. They saw Clive and other officers of the Company return from India bringing back fabulous fortunes. It is not surprising that they came to entertain exaggerated ideas of India's wealth.

But the strange fact was that although the servants of the Company accumulated riches, the Company itself was faced with serious financial difficulties. The Company owed a debt of £6,000,000. It had promised to pay £400,000 a year to the Government of England. It was required to give subsidies to the Mughal emperor, the Nawab

[1] The estimates of population vary from ten million to thirty-six million (See Mill, *The History of India*, Vol V, p 376) Roberts takes the figure thirty million and considers that ten million perished According to Keith the deaths totalled one-fifth of the population (Roberts, P E., *History of British India under Company and Crown* (1930), p 167; Keith, A B, *A Constitutional History of India* (1937), p 58

[2] Hunter, W. W, *The Annals of Rural Bengal*, p. 410

of Bengal and the Indian chiefs to the tune of £1,000,000 per annum. Besides, it had to maintain an army of 30,000 soldiers. On top of all this, the proprietors raised their dividend from six per cent to ten per cent in 1767 and to 12½ per cent in 1772. The result was that the Company was obliged not only to postpone the payment of £400,000, but actually to beg for a further loan of a million pounds from the Government. This naturally raised an alarm and when the stories of the gruesome disaster of 1769-70 arrived in England, it became imperative to take immediate steps to put the Company's affairs in order.

Warren Hastings tears the veil

In 1772, Warren Hastings, who had long served the Company in various capacities, was appointed Governor of Bengal He tore the mask of Mughal sovereignty asunder and presented the Company in its true colours as a military power holding the country by right of conquest. He repudiated unilaterally the agreement with the Mughal emperor and the Nawab of Bengal. He deprived the Nawab of his rights as the Nazim and joined to the Diwani (land-revenue grant) the Nizamat (administration of criminal justice and police). He dismissed the Naib-Diwans, assumed the administration of land-revenue, and transferred the Board of Revenue and the treasury from Murshidabad to Calcutta. The tribute promised to the emperor was withheld and the Nawab's share of the revenue reduced. The subahs of Allahabad and Korah which had been assigned to the emperor were ceded to the Nawab of Oudh for fifty lakhs of rupees, and an English brigade was lent to the Nawab for a sum of £400,000 to crush the Rohillas. Burke denounced these transactions as "a shocking, horrible, and outrageous breach of faith."[1] The excuse of the Governor General was, and that of his apologists has been, the ancient maxim of *raison d'etre.*

A radical change was indicated in the constitutional, administrative and economic system of the Company, for in the words of Chatham, "India teems with iniquities so rank, as to smell to earth and heaven."[2] No longer was it possible to shirk the responsibility of the management of an empire which had been acquired by a private agency. The East India Company was no longer a merely

[1] *The Cambridge History of India,* Vol. V, p 216
[2] *Ibid,* p 187

commercial body. It had developed into a political organisation exercising sovereign authority over several million subjects. It was necessary to formulate afresh the relations between the State and the Company's ruling organ in England and also to determine the relation of the State with the Company's authorities in India which involved a reconsideration of the relations between the Company's Directors at home and its officials in India.

The Regulating Act of 1773 was Parliament's answer to the Indian problem. It amounted to a compromise. It avoided encroachment upon the property rights of the Company. It left the Diwani or the land-revenue administration delegated by the Mughal emperor with the Company. It also avoided the dangers involved in the increase of patronage in the hands of the English Ministers. Hence, while proprietary rights were safeguarded, sovereignty over the settlements and the territories won by war was vested in the crown. The Directors were required to inform the treasury of all revenue receipts and the Secretary of State of advices concerning all civil and military affairs.

The Regulating Act named Warren Hastings as the Governor General and also appointed the four members of his Council. It created a Supreme Court with a Chief Justice and three puisne judges to be appointed by the king. It empowered the Governor General in Council to make rules, ordinances, and regulations for good order and civil government.

Thus provision was made for all the activities of the State—legislative, judicial and executive—and the foundations of a new system of government were laid. But the building of a new structure was not easy. For the task that lay before Warren Hastings was truly herculean. He had to transform a company of merchants, factors and clerks into the machinery of government, and to replace a dying Indian system through the agency of a purely mercantile community, "ignorant of the customs, the religions, and the social habits of its peoples; neither acknowledging nor ever recognizing any responsibility to its subjects, and yet wielding in reality a power over them as unrestrained as the most absolute of despotisms."[1]

A clash of irreconcilable elements was inevitable, for the gulf that separated a vanquished and bleeding India from an England fast climbing the heights of imperial power and dominion, was unbridgeable. Warren Hastings, whose formative years had been

[1] Jones, M., *Warren Hastings*, p 105

spent in India, had acquired a respect for traditional Indian methods and forms of government, and his vision was "unclouded by sentiments of racial superiority or a sense of mission". He attempted "to adopt our Regulations to the Manners and Understanding of the People, and Exigencies of the Country, adhering, as closely as we are able, to their ancient Usages and Institutions."[2] But although he succeeded in averting the grave threat to British dominion in India at a time when the British empire was crumbling in the American continent, and although he overcame the obstacles which the Regulating Act placed in his path, his success in establishing an administrative order based on a compromise between the Eastern tradition and Western conceptions was modest. He put an end to the confusion and oppression of the dyarchic rule. But he had to carry out the reorganisation of the government amidst difficulties which may have overwhelmed a person of lesser resilience and tenacity. His efforts to organise the land-revenue administration and the judiciary, to introduce proper discipline and reform among the civil and military officials, and to rehabilitate the finances, were abortive, although they prepared the ground for the creation of a stable system afterwards.

It is true that Warren Hastings ended the dualism which divided governmental authority between the Company and the Nawab and concentrated all power in the hands of the Company, but the dualism within the Company's system continued. At the top the assertion of Parliament's sovereignty was not accompanied by the creation of any organ for its exercise. In India the authority of the Governor General was limited by that of the members of his Council and of the Chief Justice of the Supreme Court. The relations between the Governor General and the Governors of the Presidencies of Madras and Bombay were ill-defined.

Duality existed in the legal systems. The Supreme Court administered the laws of England while the Sadr Diwani Adalat and the Sadr Nizamat Adalat, and their subordinate courts, dispensed Indian civil and criminal laws or regulations framed by the Governor General and his Council. There was a conflict of jurisdictions, for the Supreme Court could construe the law to extend its civil jurisdiction over the Company's courts. Then the procedures followed in the two sets of courts were different.

[2] Forrest, G. W., *Selections from the State Papers of the Governors General of India: Warren Hastings*, Vol. II, Appendix A, p. 277

The system of administration set up in the districts for the collection of revenue and the maintenance of law and order was modelled after the Mughal organisation, and its personnel was a mixture of English and Indian officers. But the Company's constitution and the working of its central organisation were subject to the laws of England.

Lastly, the authority of the Company had a dual source and, therefore, a dual responsibility. It derived its civil powers from the grant of the Mughal emperor and its general authority from the British crown. Its loyalty to the emperor demanded that it should respect Indian laws, religions and customs. On the other hand, as the agent of the British Government, it was bound to uphold British methods and principles. Thus there was inevitably a conflict between the advocates of Indianisation on the one side and of Anglicisation on the other.

With the appointment of Warren Hastings change began. The Court of Directors had issued orders to the President and Council in India "to stand forth as Diwan and by the agency of the Company's servants to take upon themselves the entire care and management of the revenues."[1] This decision was of historic importance and its effects cannot be expressed better than in the words of James Mill: "The change was enormous which it was the nature of this decree to produce. It was a revolution much greater, probably, than any previous conjuncture—than even the change from Hindu to Mohammedan masters, had been able to create. The transition from Hindu to Mohammedan masters had only changed the hands by which the sword was wielded, and favours were dispensed; the machine of the government, still more the texture of the society, underwent feeble alterations; and the civil part of the administration was, from conveniency, left almost wholly in the hands of the Hindus. A total change in the management of the revenues more deeply affected the condition, individually and collectively, of the people of India, than it is easy for the European reader to conceive. *It was an innovation by which the whole property of the country, and along with it the administration of justice, were placed upon a new foundation.*"[2]

On 13th April, Hastings had entered on his office of Governor; on 14th April, the Court of Directors' decision to abolish the post of

[1] Firminger, *Fifth Report*, Vol I, Introduction, p ccxii
[2] Mill and Wilson, *The History of British India*, Vol III, p 365 (italics ours)

Naib-Diwan reached him. The Nawab was a minor at that time so that the abolition of the post of Naib-Diwan brought the Company directly into contact with the people as the supreme power in the land. In the words of the Committee of Circuit, the Court had "been pleased to direct a total change of system, and have left the plan and execution of it to the discretion of the Board without any formal repeal of the regulations which they had before framed and adapted to another system—the abolition of which necessarily includes that of its subsidiary institutions unless they shall be found to coincide with the new."[1]

The question of farming out the revenue to the existing zamindars or to the new bidders, was discussed at great length between the members of the Governor's Council on the one hand, and between the President and Council and the Court of Directors on the other. And finally it was decided to make use of the existing agency of collection rather than pension off the zamindars and make the ryots the virtual proprietors of their holdings. "To expose the zamindars and talookdars to this risk", wrote Hastings, "is neither consistent with our notions of equity, nor with your (i.e. the Directors') orders, which direct that we do not by any sudden change alter the constitution, nor deprive the zamindars etc., of their ancient privileges and immunities."[2] But, at the same time, the interests of the State were not to be sacrificed. It was laid down, therefore, that the settlement be made with the existing zamindars and taluqdars, wherever they were available, in preference to the new revenue farmers, but where zamindars were not forthcoming or were not willing to take up the obligation to pay the amount of revenue that the new bidders were willing to do, settlement might be made with the latter. Thus preference was to be given to the existing zamindars only so far as they were willing to pay the amount of revenue that the Company could exact from others who did not possess any rights previously. It was decided in 1772 to have a five-year revenue settlement.

Hastings' land-revenue settlements brought ruin upon the cultivators and the proprietors as the uncertainty of assessment negatived the will to improve cultivation. His revenue collectors were armed with wide judicial and magisterial powers which denied the landowners security from the oppression of the officers. The

[1] Firminger, *op cit.*, Introduction, pp. ccxii-ccxiii; *Sixth Report of Secrecy*, 1772, p. 18
[2] Firminger, *op. cit.*, Introduction, p. ccxvii

officers of the East India Company themselves participated freely in the general loot of the rights in land held from times immemorial by the dumb and helpless peasantry of Bengal. There is the case, for instance, of the grant of a large zamindari to one of the native servants of Hastings, Kuntu Baboo by name. The grant was registered in the name of the ten-year old son of Kuntu Baboo and Hastings defended the grant by stating that it was not a favour shown to his servant, but the best terms that could be secured from any grantee. Hastings was not alone in making transactions of such dubious character. Between 1773 and 1793, the practice of the Company's servants securing zamindaris in the name of their native servants, or Banias, was widespread. The majority of the Committee of Circuit, for instance, wrote: "When we affirm that farms to the amount of 13 lacks and a half per annum, and contracts for providing the Company's investment to the amount of 16 lacks more, could not have been heaped upon the Governor's Banian or his son, or his brother, entirely for their own profit, we do not pretend to give the gross and palpable proof of a communication of interests between the master and his servants; this perhaps is impossible. The Court of Directors, however, will observe that in all the abuses already proved, the Banian is constantly the ostensible man in whose name the farm or contract is held by the master. Mr. Fleetwood's Banian is a nominal farmer of Sharigar; Mr. Thackeray's of Silhet; Mr. Christie's of Banjora and Apole; Mr. Barton's of the salt-farm of Belloa; and we have reason to believe that not less than *one-third of the Company's lands in these provinces are, or have lately, been held by the Banians of the English gentlemen*."[1]

This was in 1775. The practice continued even thereafter and by 1793, when the Permanent Settlement was made, about one-half of the land in Bengal must have been usurped in this way by the "Banians".

Warren Hastings had dealt a terrific blow to the ancient edifice of Indian rural economy. He had held the view that all land was the property of the State and, therefore, the share of the cultivator in the produce was limited to the wages of his labour and the profit of his agricultural stock; the share of the intermediary was the commission

[1] Committee of Circuit's Minute dated September 15, 1775, Firminger, *op cit.*, pp ccxxvi-ccxxvii (italics ours)

allowable to a tax-collector for his service, and the rest belonged to the Government. This theory had been put into practice with disastrous consequences. The rights of the hereditary landlords had been ignored. Lands had been put to auction and leased to the highest bidder who could produce the requisite security for rent. The first auction was held in 1772 for five years, and the subsequent ones were held annually.

Another important change introduced by Warren Hastings had been in the mode of securing the payment of government dues. "In case of their falling in arrears, they (the zamindars) shall be liable to be dispossessed and their zamindarees, or portions of them, shall be sold to make up the deficiency."[1] This led to numerous abuses—severity on the part of collectors, rack-renting on the part of farmers, and concealment and evasion by the cultivators.

Regarding the effects of these measures, Philip Francis recorded in his minute that the greater part of the zamindars was ruined, and people of lower rank were employed by the Government to collect the taxes. R.C. Dutt, reviewing the proceedings, says, "all the great zamindars of Bengal, all the ancient families, suffered under this system of annual settlements, frequent enhancements, and harsh methods of realisation such as they had never known before. Descendants of old houses found their estates pass into the hands of money-lenders and speculators from Calcutta; widows and minor proprietors saw their peaceful subjects oppressed by rapacious agents appointed from Calcutta."[2] He illustrates these remarks by describing the sufferings of the people in the three largest estates in Bengal—Burdwan, Rajshahi and Dinajpore.[3]

Pitt's India Act

Nor was the general condition of affairs in good shape. The Company was in serious financial difficulties. The inglorious wars with Mysore and the expensive campaigns against the Marathas had drained its resources. The expenses of shipping, which had increased on account of the world war in which England was engaged, were seriously affecting trade. The Regulating Act had broken down in practice. It had failed to define and demarcate clearly the sphere of

[1] Kaye, J W, *The Administration of the East India Company*, p. 172
[2] Dutt, R C, *The Economic History of India under Early British Rule*, p. 61
[3] *Ibid*, pp 61 *et seqq*

authority and responsibility of the Government, the Company, the Company's servants in India, the Governor General and his Council, and the three Presidencies. The administration was reeking with abuse. Warren Hastings had himself described it as "a system charged with expensive establishments, and precluded by the multitude of dependants and the curse of patronage, from reformation; a government debilitated by the various habits of inveterate licentiousness. A country oppressed by private rapacity, and deprived of its vital resources by the enormous quantities of current specie annually exported in the remittance of private fortunes."[1]

The troubles of the Company were not confined to India alone. Opposition had been mounting up in England over the past twenty years. Warren Hastings had given rise to anxiety and mistrust, which the worsening situation in the war with the American colonies and the Hispano-French preparations for invasion had accentuated. The Ministers were casting covetous glances towards India where the Company had acquired territories yielding a revenue of four million pounds a year. Indian patronage and funds would solve many of their problems. Adam Smith, commenting on the means of reducing the public debt of England, wrote: "The territorial acquisitions of the East India Company, the undoubted right of the Crown, that is, of the state and people of Great Britain, might be rendered another source of revenue, more abundant, perhaps, than all those already mentioned. Those countries are represented as more fertile, more extensive; and, in proportion to their extent, much richer and more populous than Great Britain."[2]

Parliament was restive and the people were demanding 'public economy'. Philip Francis, the inveterate opponent of Hastings, was hurling accusations against the Governor General and the Company, factious feelings were running high among the politicians, and the frantic endeavours of George III to re-establish royal prerogative and re-assert royal authority were rousing general resentment. The Whigs were ranged against the court party. The personal rivalry between Fox, the leader of the Whigs, and Pitt, who found his support in the court favourites, reacted violently upon the affairs of the East India Company. Thinkers like Adam Smith expressed disapproval of the empire-building activity of the Company. He wrote, "No two

[1] *The Cambridge History of India* (Indian reprint), Vol. V, p. 198
[2] Adam Smith, *The Wealth of Nations* (Modern Library edition), p. 898

characters seem more inconsistent than those of trader and sovereign. If the trading spirit of the English East India Company renders them very bad sovereigns, the spirit of sovereignty seems to have rendered them equally bad traders. While they were traders only, they managed their trade successfully, and were able to pay from their profits a moderate dividend to the proprietors of their stock. Since they became sovereigns, with a revenue which, it is said, was originally more than three million sterling, they have been obliged to beg the extraordinary assistance of government in order to avoid immediate bankruptcy. In their former situation, their servants in India considered themselves as the clerks of merchants: in their present situation, these servants consider themselves as the ministers of sovereigns."[1]

Thus when the Company faced with financial difficulties petitioned the Government for relief, the floodgates of criticism and denunciation were thrown open. Select and secret committees of enquiry were appointed and they produced numerous and voluminous reports. Parliament simmered with excitement. The parties put forward their own bills embodying their ideas of reform. Ultimately, in 1784, Pitt's India Bill was adopted, and principles on which Indian affairs would for the next three-quarters of a century be conducted, were established. Parliament unambiguously asserted its sovereignty over the Indian territories, and for its exercise appointed a Board of Commissioners consisting of Ministers and Privy Councillors. The Board was empowered to superintend, direct and control, all acts, operations and concerns which in any way related to the civil or military government or revenues of the British territorial possessions in the East Indies. One of the Ministers was designated as the President. He came to be known as the Secretary of State for India, and became the sole repository of the powers of the Board. Thus the Company was divested of its political power, but it retained its rights of patronage and its commercial privileges, and remained a subordinate agency through which Parliament managed the affairs of India.

Cornwallis and the Company Bahadur

Pitt's India Act removed the defects of the Regulating Act. It enhanced the prestige and authority of the Governor General

[1] *Ibid*, p. 771

both in relation to the Council, which he was empowered to overrule, and in relation to the Presidencies of Bombay and Madras, which were definitely subordinated to Calcutta. Cornwallis' hands were further strengthened by conferring upon him both the offices of the Governor General and the Commander-in-Chief.

The task prescribed for Cornwallis was "the creation of an efficient administrative machinery, which would provide peace and dispense justice, repair the Company's finances ruined by corruption and misgovernment, and achieve the ultimate aim of realizing a regular surplus of revenue sufficient to purchase the Company's annual investment of India piece-goods and China tea."[1] Cornwallis brought to bear upon his tasks the ideas of the English landed aristocracy. The landed proprietors had been the motive force behind England's progress and he had "avowed his intention of establishing an aristocracy upon the European model" in India[2]. He was a Whig, and he wanted to apply the Whig principles to the system of Indian government, viz. the limitation of the executive powers, the separation of the executive from the judiciary, the reduction of the State's interference in economic matters and the enforcement of freedom of contract. Unfortunately, he was ignorant of Indian conditions and he had no experience of Indian men and affairs. He entertained a low opinion of Indian institutions and methods. He was imbued with the conqueror's sense of racial superiority, and his countrymen were losing touch with Indians as the number of English men and women grew in India.

Under pressure of these ideas and circumstances, the British system of administration took shape and grew. Its effect was twofold. On the one hand, it destroyed the old order, and on the other, it set in motion forces which ultimately led to the emergence of new India.

During the Governor-Generalship of Cornwallis the conqueror's rule was given proper shape and organisation. In the years following his relinquishment of office, no radical change occurred. The main outline of the system remained substantially in force till 1858 though important minor modifications were carried out.

So far as supreme authority was concerned, Pitt's India Act transferred it from the Company to Parliament. Parliament made laws for the governance of India, and exercised its power over the

[1] Stokes, Eric, *The English Utilitarians and India* (Oxford, 1959), p. 25
[2] Mill and Wilson, *The History of British India*, Vol. V, p 341

civil and military affairs of the British possessions in India. The ultimate direction and determination of policies was taken away from the Company, and entrusted to the President of the Board of Control (or the Commissioners), whose position was assimilated to that of Secretary of State. Nominally, the Courts of Directors and of Proprietors continued to exercise their previous privileges. They retained the rights of patronage and dealt with the details of management. But they were prohibited from interfering with orders approved by the Board and completely excluded from the management of all transactions "concerning the levying of war or making of peace, or treating and negotiating with any of the native princes or states in India". All orders relating to these transactions were transmitted through a secret committee of three Directors. The right of patronage of the Company was partly modified by giving to the crown the power of removing or recalling any servant of the Company. The Board of Control acquired access to all the papers of the Company and its approval was necessary for all despatches relating to matters other than commercial business.

These arrangements, which constituted the Home Government of India, were somewhat complicated as the authority of the Board and the Directors was conjoint, and in the beginning it was difficult to say to what extent the Board exercised its responsibilities. But soon all power relating to internal administration as well as transactions with foreign powers passed into the hands of the Secretary of State. The Court of Directors was reduced to the status of "the Mayor and Aldermen of any Corporation Town". In the words of Kaye, "the happiness of the people of India is dependent less upon the will of a deliberative body of four and twenty English gentlemen...than upon the caprice of a single man, who may be gone to-morrow, who may preside over the India Board and govern India for a fortnight, and then be suddenly deposed by some gust of Parliamentary uncertainty, by the mistaken tactics of an inexperienced Party leader, or the neglect of an inefficient 'whipper-in.'"[1]

Thus the Secretary of State took the place of the Grand Mughal, but with this difference: the Mughal lived in Delhi; his successor lived in London separated by a distance of over 6,000 miles from his subjects. The tenure of his office was usually short. The holder of office was charged with the promotion of the interests of the English

[1] Kaye, J W., *The Administration of the East India Company*, p 133

nation which through its elected representatives in Parliament, held him under close scrutiny, and called him severely to account if his stewardship was not satisfactory.

Principles of the Company's government

The type of government established by Pitt's Act was an entirely new experience for India. The new sovereign was not a person of flesh and blood such as India had known in the past, but an abstraction. The Indians who came under this sovereign's rule had the vaguest notions about its identity. Its agents in India whose orders they had to obey had short-term offices and were perpetually changing. In their perplexity they clothed the sovereign with a concrete personality and gave it the designation "Kampani Bahadur".

They also learnt to distinguish between Kampani Bahadur and the persons who were the temporary bearers of its authority. Thus the distinction of the private and public capacities of the individual began to take root in the Indian mind.

Pitt's India Act secured the overall control of Parliament over Indian affairs, but Pitt recognised that the government of such extensive and remote countries could not be adequately conducted from London, and therefore delegated to the Governor General and Council in India all the functions of the State under the superintendence, direction and control of the Secretary of State. Cornwallis, who was the first Governor General appointed under the Act, put a liberal interpretation on its provisions and stretched his authority to its widest limits.

So far as the law-making function was concerned, the Regulating Act of 1773 had empowered the Governor General and Council to make rules, ordinances and regulations for the good order and civil government of the Company's settlement at Fort William in Bengal, and all places subordinate thereto. By the Act of 1784, the Governor General and Council were empowered to frame regulations for the provincial courts and councils. Then in 1793 "A Regulation for forming into a regular Code of all Regulations that may be enacted for the Internal Government of the British territories in Bengal" was passed. This Regulation applied to the rights, persons and property of the Indian subjects, and bound the courts of justice to regulate their decisions by the rules and ordinances contained in it. What is of significance is that it required that all laws relating to the rights of

persons and property should be printed with translations in Indian languages, and prefixed by statements of grounds on which they were enacted, so that individuals may be enabled to acquaint themselves with their rights, privileges and immunities. There was also a provision for the modification and alteration of these codes as experience suggested.

Thus, the foundation was laid in this country of government by written laws and regulations, in place of the personal rule of the monarch as had been the practice in vogue so far. The sovereign's will came to be expressed through regulations and acts, the interpretation of which was left to the courts. Only one exception was made to the law-making power of the Governor General. The Regulation of 1793 enacted that "in suits regarding succession, inheritance, marriage, and caste, and all religious usages and institutions, the Muhammedan laws with respect to Muhammedans, and the Hindoo laws with regard to Hindoos, are to be considered as the general rules by which the Judges are to form their decision". With the exception of the causes mentioned in the Regulation, the rest of the Hindu and Muslim law became inoperative. Also the decision on disputes regarding the interpretation of the injunctions relating to these causes passed to the judges, and thus modification by interpretation—a well-known form of evolution of laws—was transferred from the people's representatives to government officials. Could it also be held that these laws, whatever their sanctity in the eyes of their followers, rested henceforth upon the basis of governmental sanction—the Regulation of 1793 ?

So far as criminal law was concerned, the Muslim code remained in force till 1772. The right of the government to alter it was recognised by the Regulating Act of 1773; and consequently it was subjected to important restrictions in its application. By subsequent regulations it was completely transformed.

The Bengal Regulation of 1793 provided a model for similar codes prepared and enacted for Madras (1802) and Bombay (1799 and 1827), and the reservation regarding Hindu and Muslim laws was extended to these Presidencies.

The corpus of laws which now governed Indian society was largely determined by foreigners. It not only covered the entire field of civil and criminal justice, but also directed the reservation of personal laws to the Hindu and Muslim communities It also

determined that in cases where the parties to a suit were of different persuasions, not the Hindu or the Muslim law, but principles of justice, equity and good conscience would apply.

By the regulations custom was allowed to supersede the sacred law, as in the case of the Khojas, Memans and some Panjabi Muslim tribes.

In this way, for the first time, a part of India came to live under a government exercising the regular legislative functions. It passed under the regime of a dynamic legal system which was modifiable by human will as opposed to unalterable, divinely promulgated, sacred laws. The administrators of these laws were not priests, nor those learned in the sacred lore; they were secular courts whose presiding officers belonged to different races, professed different creeds, and dispensed justice to all irrespective of their religion. The substitution of the concept of a civil law, enacted by a responsible, secular, human agency and applied universally without distinction of class, replacing arbitrary decrees of irresponsible, earthly or heavenly authority and discriminating laws, differing in application from person to person and caste to caste or group to group, was a profound revolution affecting thought and conduct, individual and social.

The administrative set-up of a country is so organised as to accomplish the aims and objects of its rulers. In the case of India these aims were formulated by the East India Company which, in consonance with their constitution, was, above everything else, interested in realising the maximum of profits from their Indian possessions. So far as these aims were concerned, there was no difference between the Company and its masters, the Government of England. But while Parliament took over the exercise of supreme authority, it left the Company till 1813 entirely free to determine its commercial policies, and to retain its monopoly of the trade of India. But even here public policy came to be determined, apart from the considerations of profits to the shareholders of the Company, by the larger national interests of England rather than those of the people of India.

The Permanent Settlement

A more fundamental change in the structure of Indian society and the rural economy of the country was wrought by the Permanent Settlement introduced by Cornwallis. The Settlement destroyed

the old village community, changed the property relations, created new social classes and caused a social revolution in the Indian countryside.

Warren Hastings' measures had turned Bengal into a shambles. He had left behind him "a dark trail of misery, insurrections and famines". Cornwallis was directed to cleanse the Augean stables, and to make a settlement which combined the consideration of the Company's interests with the happiness of the natives and the security of the land-holders. On arrival in India, he ordered an enquiry into the question of usages, tenures and rents.

The enquiry was headed by John Shore, who submitted his report in June 1789. Regarding land rights, Shore came to a conclusion which was different from that held by Warren Hastings. He wrote, "I consider the Zamindars as the proprietors of the soil, to the property of which they succeed by right of inheritance, according to the laws of their own religion; and that the sovereign authority cannot justly exercise the power of depriving them of the succession, nor of altering it, when there are any legal heirs. The privilege of disposing of the land, by sale or mortgage, is derived from their fundamental right, and was excercised by the Zamindars before we acquired the Dewanny."[1]

Shore's conclusion was as mistaken as that of Warren Hastings, but Cornwallis, who was biased in favour of the English system and was cautioned by the failure of his predecessor's experiments, stamped it with the seal of his approval. By 1789 when the question of the Permanent Settlement came to be discussed, a new class of revenue farmers who were of very recent origin and were, in fact, the creation of the British, had come into existence. As the Floud Commission noticed[2], there were four classes of zamindars in Bengal with whom the revenue was settled permanently in 1793. First, there were the original independent chiefs such as the Rajas of Cooch Bihar, Assam and Tripura, who retained possession of their territories on payment of revenue as tribute to the Mughal rulers; secondly, there were the old established land-holding families, such as the Rajas of Rajshahi, Burdwan, and Dinajpur, who like

[1] See Minute of Mr Shore, dated June 18, 1789, para 370, respecting the Permanent Settlement of the Lands in the Bengal Provinces, Firminger, W. K., *The Fifth Report*, Vol. II, pp. 80-81

[2] *Report of the Bengal Land Revenue Commission*, 1943, para 34

the independent chiefs paid a fixed land tax to the ruling powers; thirdly, there were the collectors of revenue, who had been inducted by the Mughal Government, and whose office had tended, after several generations, to become hereditary; and lastly, there were the farmers, who had been in charge of the collection of revenue after the grant of Diwani to the East India Company and who had come to be known by the general term 'zamindar'. This class included not only a large number of "Calcutta Banians" who had obtained zamindaris by openly bidding for the payment of revenue, but also a large number of Benami holders from amongst the servants of the Company who had lands in the names of native Banias and servants.

"It is obvious", writes the Floud Commission, "that if a settlement had to be made with any one, the first two classes had a strong claim, the third class had a lesser claim and the fourth had virtually no claim at all."

Leaving out of account the petty artisans, servitors and ancillaries of the village, who were little affected by the Cornwallis code, there were three parties concerned in sharing the produce of land—the Government, the intermediaries or zamindars and the cultivators or ryots. The Permanent Settlement defined the position of the first two and fixed permanently the Government's share in the produce of the soil. Not unexpectedly, it conferred the greatest benefits on the Government. So far as the financial part was concerned, the land-revenue demand was fixed at the highest pitch that had ever been reached. The State's share was fixed at 89 per cent of the estimated rent of the land which left only 11 per cent to the landlord for his duties connected with the collection of revenue.[1] The Government was thus saved the annoying fluctuation of its income and assured a certain steady and ample revenue for both its commercial and administrative needs—for investment, remittances and governmental expenses. Further, while the revenue demand on the lands already under cultivation was fixed, the Government could still look forward to the increase in its income with the extension of cultivation.

Besides, there was the additional financial advantage arising from the abolition of the entire revenue-collecting machinery consisting of Tahsildars, Qanungos, Patwaris and other revenue officers.

Even more important than the financial gains were the political

[1] See Rickards, R., *India or Facts*, Vol. I (1829 edition), p. 360

advantages of the Settlement. The zamindars possessed great powers under the Mughal rule. Besides their duty of revenue collection, they exercised magisterial and executive authority. For all practical purposes and to all outward appearance, they enjoyed the appurtenances of sovereignty in their respective areas. They were ordinarily inclined to be intractable, and became contumacious and rebellious under weak governments. Cornwallis struck a bargain. The political powers were taken away from them and in return they were endowed with unlimited powers of ownership of land which had not, in the past, belonged to them, and of the enhancement of rents at their pleasure. Their political authority and power of creating trouble disappeared, but their economic powers over the peasantry were enormously increased. Henceforth the two parties to the bargain settled down to a period of peaceful cooperation, one exercising the political authority, the other economic powers, and both preying upon and oppressing the tiller of the soil. "But looking at it solely from the political point of view", says Seton-Karr, "it was the means of allaying apprehensions and removing doubts, while it proved a strong incentive to good behaviour, and to something beyond passive loyalty in seditious and troublous times."[1]

The ryot who by the sweat of his brow created the wealth which sustained the zamindar and filled the treasury of the government was sadly neglected by the Settlement. The Court of Directors acknowledged that "the right of the Bengal ryots had passed away *sub-silentio* and they had become to all purposes tenants-at-will."[2] According to Kaye, there was "no definition of the claim to be made by him (the zamindar) upon the under-tenant", and "the zamindars, except in a few special cases, exact from the Ryots as much as they can be made to pay; and there is no doubt that what is left to the actual cultivator, after all these exactions, is little more than suffices to keep the souls and bodies of the peasantry together". He adds, "it was decreed, indeed, that the Ryot had no rights, and he was left to fight it out with the Zamindar."[3]

The only exceptions were the under-proprietors or taluqdars holding lands from the zamindars, and the resident tenants (*khud-kasht* peasants), who were, more or less, protected from the enhance-

[1] Seton-Karr, W. S., *The Marquess Cornwallis* (Rulers of India Series), p. 72

[2] Ruthnaswamy, M., *Some Influences that made the British Administrative System in India* (1939), p. 252

[3] Kaye, J. W., *The Administration of the East India Company*, p. 198

ment of their rents by the proprietors. But all others, and even those resident tenants who might acquire tenurial right after 1793, were left to the tender mercies of the zamindar. There was nothing to prevent their ejection, since Shore had already declared that "the regulation of the rents of the *raiyats* is properly a transaction between the zamindar and landlord and his tenants and not of Government."[1]

With the extension of cultivation and the increase in population, as also the decline of industry and the shift of working populations from trade and industry to agriculture, the demand for land grew, the price of land increased, and the opportunities for rack-renting multiplied.

The exorbitant rate of land-revenue pressed so hard upon the zamindars that about half of the landed property in Bengal is reported to have been put on sale and changed hands in a period of twenty-two years from 1793 to 1815. The purchaser was not bound to charge the same rent from the cultivator that the old landlord was charging. The new landlords demanded and obtained higher rents. Their example was followed by the old landlords for as Dr. Field points out, the "prevailing rate of rent being thus raised, there was little difficulty in enhancing the rents of the remaining *raiyats* up to the same level."[2]

It is true that the zamindars were enjoined to enter into agreements (*pattas*) with the cultivators, which stated the exact sum of the rent including the customary dues (recognised cesses or *abwabs*), the area held and the rates, and prohibited, on pain of fine, the realisation of any amount over and above the specified sum, or the levy of any new cesses. But the remedy provided against any breach of the agreement was the institution of a case in a court of law—a course both dilatory and expensive and beyond the means of the cultivator.

The result was fifty years of untold hardship and misery unrelieved by any ameliorative measures. Baden-Powell is constrained to admit that "where it is difficult to defend the course of legislation is in the time between 1800 or 1812 and 1845. The errors then made were fatal."[3] Concerning the law of 1799, he says, "it is difficult to

[1] Baden-Powell, B. H., *The Land Systems of British India*, Vol I, p 619, note I
[2] *Ibid*, p 625
[3] Baden-Powell, *op. cit.*, Vol. I, p 615

read its monstrous provisions without indignation."[1] It was not till 1859 that a little relief was provided.

Exclusion of Indians from Government

Under the new dispensation Indians were excluded from all positions of influence and authority. Sovereign power belonged to the British Parliament which acted at home through the agency of the Board of Control in political matters, and the Company's Directorate in matters of commerce. In India, the supreme government was a subordinate branch of the British administration, endowed with delegated powers in the legislative, political and executive fields. The three—Parliament, the Home Government consisting of the Board of Control and the Directorate, and the Indian Government constituted by the Governor General and Council—were wholly British, wholly irresponsible to the Indian people.

In constituting the services, Cornwallis decided to exclude Indians from all higher appointments. There were many reasons for this racial discrimination, which was an altogether new phenomenon in the history of India. The British had come to entertain an overweening estimate "not only of their own political contrivances in India, but of the institutions of their own country in the mass. Under the influence of a vulgar infirmity, That *Self* must be excellent, and everything which affects the pride of *Self* must have surpassing excellence, English institutions, and English practices, have been generally set up as a standard, by conformity or disconformity with which, the excellence or defect of everything in the world was to be determined."[2] It followed that the system of administration established according to British concepts should be manned by British personnel.

Moreover, the British rulers had come to hold an extremely low opinion of Indian ability, integrity and character. In Mill's opinion, "in India, there is no moral character. Sympathy and antipathy are distributed by religious, not by moral judgment."[3] Charles Grant, who was a member of the Clapham sect, and a colleague of Wilberforce, had been a member of the Board of Trade at Calcutta, Chairman of the Board of Directors, and a Member of Parliament, indicted the peoples of India as "a race of men lamentably degenerate

[1] *Ibid*, p 636
[2] Mill and Wilson, *The History of British India*, Vol V, p 407
[3] *Ibid*, p. 408

and base; retaining but a feeble sense of moral obligation; yet obstinate in their disregard of what they know to be right, governed by malevolent and licentious passions, strongly exemplifying the effects produced on society by a great and general corruption of manners, and sunk in misery by their vices."[1] According to Cornwallis, "every native of Hindustan (I really believe) [is] corrupt".[2] Mr. Paterson of Dacca, in reply to a questionnaire circulated in 1802, said, "their minds are totally uncultivated; of the duties of morality they have no idea. They possess in a great degree that low cunning which generally accompanies depravity of heart. They are indolent, and grossly sensual. They are cruel and cowardly, insolent and abject. They have superstition without a sense of religion; and, in short, they have all the vices of savage life without any of its virtues."[3]

The religious reformers of England—the methodists and the evangelists—too painted the Indians in the darkest colours. According to Wilberforce, the Hindus were worshippers of gods, which were "absolute monsters of lust, injustice, wickedness, and cruelty. In short, their religious system is one grand abomination."[4]

Then in order to perpetuate British rule, it was felt necessary to reduce the Indians to a condition of utter helplessness and to root out all germs of ambition from their minds. To quote Shore, "the fundamental principle of the English had been to make the whole Indian nation subservient, in every possible way, to the interests and benefits of ourselves. The Indians have been excluded from every honour, dignity, or office, which the lowest Englishman could be prevailed upon to accept."[5]

Expediency too suggested elimination of Indians from the ranks of officers. Cornwallis was concerned to remove the grievances of the European military officers of the Company who were treated by the royal army officers stationed in India with haughty contempt. But among the Company's troops there were also a number of Indian officers who were treated with respect. Many of the oldest regiments were named after Indian commandants. Indian officers like M. Yusuf Khan had distinguished themselves in the service of the Company. Yusuf Khan was in command of two to

[1] Stokes, Eric, *The English Utilitarians and India*, p 31
[2] Seton-Karr, W S., *The Marquess Cornwallis*, *op. cit*, p 121
[3] Kaye, J W., *The Administration of the East India Company*, p 343, footnote
[4] Stokes, Eric, *op. cit*, p. 31
[5] Shore, J., *Notes on Indian Affairs*, Vol II, p. 57

three thousand men among whom were European soldiers also. He fought in the early Karnatak wars, "he conducted sieges, defended forts, and carried supplies and reinforcements through the enemy's country at critical times". According to Beveridge, the relief of Trichinopoly and the capitulation of the French in the island of Srirangam, were made possible by the dexterity of Yusuf Khan. Malcolm says, "the name of this hero, for such he was, occurs almost as often in the pages of the English historian (Robert Orme) as that of Lawrence and Clive."[1] Sir Henry Lawrence speaks of him in such glowing terms as "faithful, gallant, enterprising". According to a British writer, "the names of Muhammad Yusuf, Jamal Saheb and others fill a page of history scarcely less memorable than that which sets forth the exploits of our own Forde, Calliaud and Coote".[2]

Subahdars Ali Khan, Husain Ali, Bhavani Singh and others shed lustre on their profession. Such Indian officers would have to be rated as equals of the officers of the royal regiments if the Company's commanders were to be levelled up to the status of the royal troops. But it was impossible to trust the Indian officers in charge of the Indian rank and file. The presence of a mixed cadre of Indians and Englishmen in the army was dangerous for a government based upon military force. The Directors of the Company made this clear in their letter dated December 15, 1808. They said, "we maintain an army of 150,000 men; we will only say that by their means all India is kept in peace towards the Company." This was amply emphasised by Cornwallis in his letter to the court. He stated, "It must be universally admitted that, without a large and well-regulated body of Europeans, our hold of these valuable dominions must be very insecure. It cannot be expected that even the best of treatment would constantly conciliate the willing obedience of so vast a body of people, differing from ourselves in almost every circumstance of laws, religion, and customs; and oppression of individuals, errors of judgement, and several other unforeseen causes will no doubt arouse an inclination to revolt. On such occasions it would not be wise to place great dependence upon their countrymen who compose the native regiments to secure their subjection."[3]

As far as recruitment to the civil services was concerned, Indians

[1] Hill, S. C, *Yusuf Khan, the Baluch*, Appendix V

[2] See Ruthnaswami, M., *Some Influences that made the British Administrative System in India*, p 153

[3] Seton-Karr, W. S, *The Marquess Cornwallis, op. cit.*, pp. 99-100

were condemned on much the same grounds. "Of the Bengaleze", says Grant, "then it is true most generally that they are destitute, to a wonderful degree, of those qualities which are requisite to the security and comfort of society. They want truth, honesty, and good faith, in an extreme . . . . . . Want of veracity, especially, is so habitual, that if a man has truth to defend, he will hardly fail to recur to falsehood for its support." And again, "the deliberate malice, the falsehood, the calumnies, and the avowed enmity with which the people pursue each other, and sometimes from father to son, offer a very mortifying view of the human character."[1]

The argument, however, that Indians could not be appointed to the higher posts because of defects in their character, is disingenuous in the extreme. For, the Englishmen who came out to India were themselves no paragons of virtue. In fact, they furnish the fullest justification for Kipling's, "there ain't no ten commandments east of Suez". The British historians Thompson and Garratt write, "A mass of contemporary literature makes it possible to reconstruct the life of Europeans in India during the early days of the nineteenth century. Most of them slipped easily into the lazy, dissipated habits which had already overcome so many northern invaders of the peninsula. The covenanted servants came out as boys of sixteen or seventeen, and until Wellesley's time no arrangements had been made to train them, either at home or in India. It is sometimes contended that they understood the country better than their successors. One source of knowledge they possessed. It was customary to keep Indian mistresses, but it is doubtful whether this brought any great respect for the Indian race, or much interest in its customs."[2] According to Williamson[3], these ladies of easy virtue received forty rupees per month for their services.

Trevelyan speaks of the splendid sloth and the languid debauchery of European society in those days. His description is worthy of reproduction. He says: "English gentlemen, overwhelmed with the consequences of extravagance, hampered by Hindoo women and by crowds of olive-coloured children, without either the will or the power to leave the shores of India . . . . Great men rode

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[1] *Report from the Select Committee on the Affairs of East India Company*, 1833, General Appendix, p. 20

[2] Thompson and Garratt, *Rise and Fulfilment of British Rule in India* (London, 1934), p. 192

[3] *The East India Company's Vade Mecum*, see *Ibid.*, note 2

about in state coaches, with a dozen servants running before and behind them to bawl out their titles; and little men lounged in palanquins or drove a chariot for which they never intended to pay, drawn by horses which they had bullied or cajoled out of the stables of wealthy Baboos . . . . . As a natural result there were at one time near a hundred civilians of more than thirty-five years standing who remained out here in pledge to their creditors, poisoning the principles of the younger men, and blocking out their betters from places of eminence and responsibility."[1]

According to Kaye, Cornwallis refused to employ Indians not because he mistrusted them, but because he mistrusted the European functionaries the more.

Of the general corruption prevalent among British officers, there are numerous illustrations. The British resident at Banaras, for instance, drew Rs. 1,000 per month as his fixed salary. But his income from monopolies in trade and other sources came to four lakhs of rupees a year. The collectors were paid Rs. 1,200 a month, but ordinarily made another lakh of rupees from perquisites.

Obviously, the real reasons for excluding Indians were to satisfy the demands of Englishmen for lucrative jobs, to show the conquered their rightful place, to humiliate the former ruling classes, to habituate them to a life of dependence and penury, and to remove all vestiges of independence and self-respect from their minds. Every effort was made to create easy and healthy conditions for the English servants. They were given high salaries to prevent their succumbing to temptations, and to encourage them to obey orders prohibiting participation in commerce or acceptance of presents and bribes. Their functions were clearly defined by the separation of justice from land-revenue administration, and by placing the police under the control of the judiciary. In short, they were given affluence, authority and responsibility—tutors best calculated to evoke self-esteem, a sense of mission, and the will to prove worthy.

The judiciary

In the department of the judiciary, Indians could not rise above the status of a Munsif and a Sadr Amin, in the police to that of

[1] Trevelyan, Sir G O., *The Competition Wallah* (1864), quoted by Thompson and Garratt, *op cit*, p 193

[2] Kaye, J W, *The Administration of the East India Company*, p. 420

a Darogha, and in the administrative branch to that of a deputy collector. What were then known as the covenanted services, were entirely closed to them.

The organisation of all these departments under British officers deprived the Indians of all opportunities to exercise responsibility. This not only lowered their stature as men, but what is worse disrupted the old Indian socio-political organisation. The scheme of Cornwallis took away civil and criminal justice from the hands of all those who were for long concerned in its dispensation—the village Panchayat, the Zamindar, the Faujdar, the Subahdar, the Qazi, the Pandit, etc.—and entrusted it to a new hierarchy which had no roots in the village.

In regard to the administration of justice, the first thing to notice is that the British system in India introduced racial discrimination. It divided the inhabitants of India into two groups: (i) The British-European subjects and their legitimate descendants, and (ii) the Hindus, Muslims, Asians, Armenians, Christians, and others. For these two groups there were two distinct kinds of courts of civil and criminal justice. For the first group, the courts were established under, and by, the statutes and charters of justice granted by the British royalty. They were presided over by judges appointed by the same authority. They were called the King's or Queen's courts. Besides these, there were the Justices of the Peace, magistrates and coroners.

For the second group, there were courts established by the authority of, and presided over, by the judges appointed by the East India Company. These judges were divided into two classes, namely, the covenanted and the uncovenanted.

It is not necessary here to describe the first type of courts, among which the Supreme Courts of Judicature at Calcutta, Madras and Bombay were the most important. The establishment of the Calcutta Supreme Court under the Regulating Act created at first great confusion, which was subsequently removed by the Acts of 1781, 1786 and 1793, for defining and restricting its powers. The Supreme Courts administered the common and the statute laws of England, the regulations made by the Governor General in Council in India and registered in the Supreme Court, and the Hindu and Muslim law in cases where a Hindu or Muslim was the defendant.

The courts of the Company were established in the three Presidencies by the regulations of 1793, 1802 and 1827. Since 1772 a

number of experiments had been made to evolve a satisfactory system, but it was only in 1795 that stability was reached and the broad principles of the judicature were enunciated The Code of Regulations of Cornwallis became the basis of all subsequent developments.

The general considerations underlying the Code were: (i) to divest zamindars and other traditional agents of all participation in police and judicial functions, (ii) to invest direction and control and concentration of higher posts in the covenanted service, consisting exclusively of Englishmen, and (iii) to separate land-revenue collection from the administration of Justice, and to abolish revenue courts.

The civil courts under this system constituted a regular gradation. In the lowest grade stood the courts of native commissioners. They heard and decided, in the first instance, cases where the cause of action did not exceed fifty rupees. These courts were of three denominations —Amins, Salisans, and Munsifs (referees, arbitrators, and Justices). From their decisions an appeal lay to the zillah (district) or city courts. Higher than the native commissioners were the courts of registrars, who were covenanted servants attached to the district and city courts. They were empowered to try cases up to 200 rupees. Next in order were the district and city courts, each presided over by a covenanted judge, assisted by Hindu and Muslim learned men and a registrar. They had cognisance of all civil suits, and against their decisions an appeal lay to the provincial courts. The number of district courts in Bengal was twenty-six.

The provincial courts of appeal were established at four centres—Calcutta, Dacca, Murshidabad and Patna. Each of these contained three English judges, a registrar, a Qazi, a Mufti and a Pandit. Their decisions were final in suits where the amount did not exceed 1,000 rupees; above that sum an appeal lay to the Sadr Diwani Adalat. The Sadr Diwani Adalat was the apex of the system established under the Regulations. It consisted of the Governor General (President) and the members of the Council. It heard appeals from the provincial courts, from the provincial councils and the Committee or Board of Revenue.

The administration of criminal justice was assumed by the Company after 1790, when the Deputy Governor of Bengal, who was in charge of police and criminal justice, was divested of his functions and three grades of courts of criminal justice were established.

The judges of the district and city courts were recognised as magistrates. They and their assistants were authorised to apprehend murderers, robbers, thieves, house-breakers, and persons charged with crimes and misdemeanours. In petty cases they could pass a final sentence and inflict punishment.

The four provincial courts of appeal were made into courts of circuit, which held half-yearly gaol deliveries in most districts. They were competent to pass sentences of death or imprisonment for life subject to confirmation by the Sadr Nizamat Adalat.

The supreme criminal court consisted of the Governor General and members of Council assisted by the chief Qazi and Muftis. The jurisdiction of the court extended over all matters relating to criminal justice and police. There was no appeal from its decisions, but the Governor General could pardon or commute the punishment awarded.

The police department consisted of officers appointed by the Government who relieved the zamindars and others of all responsibility for the prevention of crime. The districts were divided into *thanas* with a jurisdiction of about twenty square miles and under the superintendance of the Darogha and his assistants—all paid by the Government. The cities were placed in charge of Kotwals. The magistrates in the districts exercised control over the Daroghas.

With the establishment of civil and criminal courts, the introduction of complicated rules of procedure, the opening of possibilities of appeals to a hierarchy of courts, it was inevitable that a class of lawyers should be ushered into existence.

The judicial organisation established by the English in place of the old system was completely different in spirit and in form. It substituted for informal, speedy, inexpensive adjudication through arbitrators wearing a halo of sanctity, a kind of justice in which there was no element of reverence. This secular system put a premium upon the casuistry of pleaders. It is not, therefore, surprising that the courts became the homes of chicanery, falsehood and deceit, and that litigiousness became widespread.

Nevertheless, through the courts a consciousness of rights arose ending the regime of duty, pure and simple. The reign of personal discretion, of relative and differing standards of justice for communities, classes and castes, of denial of justice to the humble and the weak, came to an end. Except for the members of the ruling class,

concepts of even-handed justice and the rule of law took root in the soil of India. The change was of vast importance both for individual morality and public relations.

The administrative structure erected by Cornwallis was so novel and unfamiliar in its basic principles and its methods of work that it took many years for the people to get used to it. The reaction in the beginning was most disagreeable. The classes of Indians who were ousted from all positions of power and influence in the civil and military departments were sullen and hostile. The lands rapidly changed owners. The cultivators were oppressed, and both landlords and cultivators were agitated. The new system of judicature introduced a different code of laws and a different method of legal proceedings, scarcely understood by the people. It enormously increased litigation. As a result the old social ties and customs began to break down and there was a tremendous increase of crime, vice and violence.

The manners of the British officers made conditions worse. "The great distance and haughtiness with which a very large population of the civil and military servants of the Company treat the upper and middling class of natives"[1] added fuel to the fire.

The army

The reorganisation of the armed forces was another aspect of administration which engaged Cornwallis' attention. In the nature of things foreign dominion has to rely upon force for its existence. In the circumstances which prevailed at the end of the eighteenth century when a large part of India was independent, when British rule was in its initial stages, and the threat of the French who were in contact with the Indian rulers offered a serious menace, it was only too obvious that "the foundation and the instrument of all power"[2] should be the sword. The high officials of the times "had no illusion that British rule could ever rest on the affection of the people, its security depended on the impression of its invincibility[3]", and Munro talked of "the unity of our Government and our great military force"[4] as the instruments of the expansion of British dominion.

[1] Rickards, R, *India or Facts*, *op cit*, Vol I, p 107

[2] Duke of Wellington's *Narrative of the Marquess of Wellesley's Government of India*, see Ramsay Muir, *The Making of British India*, p 209

[3] Stokes, Eric, *The English Utilitarians and India*, p. 16

[4] Gleig, *Memoirs*, p 203

Naturally, Cornwallis was anxious that the military wing of the Government should be run efficiently. Although the army had been the cherished department of the Company's establishment, of which the combination of the posts of the Governor General and Commander-in-Chief in the person of Cornwallis was ample proof, there was a lot of trouble in the armed forces. A number of factors were responsible for it. In the first place, the army, at the disposal of the Company's government in India, comprised two separately organised sections—the King's forces or the European troops belonging to the British army and assigned to the service of the Company, and, secondly, the Company's forces recruited partly from Europeans but mainly from Indians. Although the King's forces were on the British establishment, all their expenses were met out of the revenues of the Company in India. The Company, of course, paid for the maintenance of its own troops. Under these arrangements, the Government of England tried to transfer its own liabilities on to the Company even though the Company might not need all the King's forces sent out to India. But the real cause of serious trouble was the difference between the status of the officers of the King's troops and that of the Company's troops. The assumption of superiority in rank and pay by the officers holding the King's commission rankled in the minds of the Company's officers and led to ugly situations.

Within the Company's forces there was discontent. The European part of the forces consisted of "the contemptible trash", "the riff-raff of the London streets got together by the Crimps, and the Gleanings of the different Gaols. The officers are, in general, young men who have ruined themselves and are obliged to fly their Country or very low people who are sent out to make their fortunes, and who will therefore stick at nothing in order to gain money."[1]

On the other hand, the Indian army was "in far better fettle". But there was considerable disparity between the emoluments of the European and the Indian rank and file.[2]

The Company's troops were, however, dissatisfied mainly on

[1] Letter of the Duke of York to Cornwallis, see Thompson and Garratt, *op cit*, p 175

[2] The following table is eloquent of the disparity in the salaries:

English officers	*Salary*
Captain (Artillery)	Rs. 448-8-0 p.m.
Lieutenant (Infantry)	Rs. 266-8-0 p m
Pilot (Navy)	Rs 700-0-0 p m.
Master (Navy)	Rs. 270-0-0 p m.
Mate (Navy)	Rs 156-0-0 p.m.

(*Continued*)

account of their allowances. Clive and Hastings had to face a great deal of trouble on this account, and when Cornwallis arrived in India he found the spirit of insubordination rampant.

Then there was also a tussle between the civil authority in the hands of the merchants and clerks, and the soldiers who looked upon themselves not only as belonging to a higher profession but also as the real conquerors of the Company's territories. The importance of the army had increased with the growth of their numbers. When Clive fought the battle of Plassey he had under his command 2,100 (Indian) sepoys, 900 Europeans and 200 half-bred Portuguese. In 1794 the strength of the Company's forces numbered 70,000, of whom 13,500 were British.[1] Thereafter the numbers rapidly increased so that by the time the Marquis of Hastings' conquests and annexations were completed, the Company had the largest standing army in the world after Russia.

Cornwallis' efforts to remove the causes of dissatisfaction met with only modest success. The Company's officers were allowed to take rank with those of the royal regiments according to the dates of their respective commissions, while serving in India. But the other grievances remained and from time to time they led to disturbances and mutiny. What, however, saved the British dominion from destruction was: (i) The remarkable capacity of the British officers and other ranks to forget their grievances in times of crisis and to rally in the defence of the interests of their country; and (ii) The utter incapacity of the Indians to unite and organise their forces against the common enemy.

Cornwallis could not carry out his plans for the reform of the armies of the Company's forces. In fact, his anti-Indian measures weakened it. He denigrated the Indian officers, kept their salaries low, allowed them no opportunity to rise, and reduced their numbers. The consequence was that, when in 1857 the revolt broke out in the

Indian Officers	*Salary*
Subedar	Rs. 82-0-0 p m.
Jamadar	Rs. 28-0-0 p.m.
Havildar	Rs 19-0-0 p m.
Naik	Rs 17-0-0 p m
Sepoy	Rs. 8-8-0 p m.

Vide Letters of the Court of Directors to the Governor General in Bengal (Public Department), August 31, 1801, and May 13, 1807

[1] See Ruthnaswamy, M., *Some Influences that made the British Administrative System in India* (1939 edition), p 125

army, there were not enough Indian officers with authority to maintain discipline.

Cornwallis erected the edifice of a system of government under which India came to be ruled over by Britain for the next hundred and fifty years. The new administrative system was based on two principles, viz. perpetuation of foreign rule and exploitation of the wealth of the subjects for the benefit of the people of the ruling power. The administrative machinery devised by Pitt's India Act and Cornwallis served these two ends admirably. The British Parliament became the supreme authority for its possessions in India. The local authority, consisting of the Governor General and Council and the Provincial Governors, was the agent for carrying out the wishes and orders of the supreme authority. All the strategic posts, both in military and civil administration, came to be manned by the members of the ruling race. The sanction for the authority exercised by the foreigner was his military might. The revenues of the country came to be utilised for paying tribute to the sovereign power, rather than for improving agriculture and industry and increasing production in this country.

The effect of these changes on the moral and material conditions of the people was disastrous. The people became sullen, apathetic, demoralised and unenterprising. They developed all the vices and moral defects that servitude and suppression of liberty bring in their wake.

CHAPTER EIGHT

THE DEVELOPMENT OF BRITISH ADMINISTRATION FROM 1793 TO 1857

I. IMPACT OF THE ECONOMIC AND POLITICAL REVOLUTIONS OF EUROPE

Whatever the defects of his system, Cornwallis had certainly evolved order out of chaos. The anarchy that had prevailed in the territories acquired after Plassey was ended and life began to move along new but orderly channels in Bengal. The subsequent expansion of British rule over the whole of India raised problems of administration similar to those already encountered in Bengal. In solving them the Cornwallis system supplied a model; although some of its features were adopted, others were modified, and its underlying ideas were challenged. The process took half a century during which the expansion of British dominion and the development of the system of administration were completed.

Europe and England

But during this period Europe had undergone great upheavals, and administrators in India had developed a new temper and a new outlook. In England tremendous changes were taking place in both the sphere of practice and of thought. The second half of the eighteenth century, "the most contemptible and venal in English Parliamentary history", was coming to an end. New problems were arising. New forces had begun to work. New ways of production of wealth on a large scale were spreading. With them new attitudes of mind, manners and morals were appearing. The new spirit which breathed upon the waters of life was bound to affect India which could not escape the consequences of the stir in the Western world.

The Industrial Revolution which had commenced in the middle of the eighteenth century was gathering momentum. England was fast becoming an industrial country and assuming the leadership of Europe in science, technology and industry. The growth of the factory system and the increase of wealth were changing the structure of English society. Science and technology were giving to man unprecedented power over the forces of nature. An unlimited vista of progress was opening before mankind. England was fortunate, for

the Industrial Revolution equipped her with means and resources which it required to meet the challenges of its European rivals.

Across the English Channel, there was another revolution which inaugurated a new era in France and stimulated progress in Europe. It swept away the old feudal system, and proclaimed the triumph of the bourgeoisie. Its armed forces which carried on their banners the slogans of equality, liberty and fraternity overturned the old decrepit regimes of Europe. Under the lead of a superb military genius—Napoleon—the French legions swept over Europe, challenged Britain, and the echoes of their victories reverberated throughout Asia.

These two revolutions released forces which eventually broke the bonds of poverty, intellectual slavery and authority, and inaugurated the era of nationalism.

On the Continent, Voltaire, Rousseau, the encyclopedists, and Kant, were the champions of the revolution in manners, sentiment and thought. In England, the new spirit inspired poets like Wordsworth, economists like Adam Smith, and philosophers like Bentham. Burke was fascinated by the vision of a society in which the past, the present and the future commingled, and art, morality and perfection found their embodiment. If Burke was the advocate of tradition and continuity, Bentham taught the liberal gospel of the greatest happiness of the greatest number. The one appealed to the instinct of preservation and the mystique of history; the other rallied under his standard the progressives. Both exercised a great influence upon the minds of Englishmen.

Besides the philosophic movement, there was a deep stir in religious life. There was a strong reaction against the latitudinarianism and moral corruption of the Hanoverian age. Wesley and Wakefield, the two dedicated leaders of the religious revival which became known as Methodism, were its leaders. They preached to the common people—colliers, mill-workers, fishermen, traders, shopkeepers and workmen—in villages and small towns. They denounced human depravity, invited men to conscious conversion and sanctification, and held out the promise of atonement and grace. The effect of their fervid oratory and of their pious living was immense. "It cannot be doubted", say the latest historians of the movement, "that without it (methodism) or some similar renovating instrumentality, England must have entered upon a period of fatal decadence."[1]

[1] Townsend, W. J.. Workman, H. B., and Enzis, George, *A New History of Methodism*, p. 375

Related to them were the Evangelicals who remained within the Anglican Church, but as a party "were more compact,........... knew their minds better, and....... ....were more aggressive than any religious school in the Church."[1] They appealed to the upper and upper-middle classes and wielded enormous influence upon the public. One of their groups was known as the Clapham sect. Wilberforce, the great advocate of the abolition of slave trade, and Cowper, the poet, belonged to it. It is said that among them "every human interest had its guardian, every religion of the globe its representative."[2]

Effects on Indian economy

The Revolutionary and Napoleonic wars gave a stimulus to the forward policy of England in India. The exaggerated fears of French intervention in Indian affairs had provided a spur to the imperialist designs of Lord Wellesley and the Marquis of Hastings. The decrees of Napoleon against British commerce and the closure of the Continental ports obliged Britain to explore new markets for the goods its new mills and factories were producing.

The Industrial Revolution, which transformed the character of English economy, affected economic relations between England and India. The main basis of the trade until now had been the export of Indian textiles against British silver. As Vera Anstey points out, "up to the eighteenth century, the economic condition of India was relatively advanced, and Indian methods of production and commercial organisation could stand comparison with those in vogue in any other part of the world."[3]

But as a result of the Industrial Revolution, England became a manufacturer of cotton cloth and other goods on a large scale, and the commodities of exchange between the two countries were reversed. Hand-made Indian textiles could not withstand competition against the machine-made goods of England and so the textile industry of India was ruined. The village artisans and weavers lost their means of livelihood and soon sank to the position of landless labourers. The land-revenue policy of the Government, combined with the ruin of village industry, completed the disintegration of the ancient village polity.

[1] Overton, J K, *The Evangelical Revival in the Eighteenth Century*, p. 159
[2] *Ibid.*, p 148
[3] See *The Economic Development of India*, p. 5

The Industrial Revolution rendered the old mercantilist policy of England unprofitable and, therefore, economists began to press for the freeing of trade from restrictions and monopolies. Freedom of enterprise had an electric effect upon trade and industry. Wealth began to grow fast.

The abundance created by the advance in industry ameliorated manners. The Napoleonic struggle tested and steeled the character of the English people, and the spread of reforms in religion and morals was conducive to the development of earnestness and gravity. Pride and prejudice became marked traits of the English character. The sense of superiority of race and the consciousness of the white man's burden began to inspire conduct. Withal the solicitude for England's pecuniary gain did not abate. "The British power in India came to be regarded after 1800 as no more than an accessory, an instrument for ensuring the necessary conditions of law and order by which the potentially vast Indian market could be conquered for British industry."[1]

New spirit in administration

The plans of Cornwallis, to repeat, were based upon his Whig principles, viz. limitation of state interference in the affairs of society supremacy of impersonal law, separation of executive and judicial powers, and the primacy of the judiciary. The Whigs also believed that property was necessary for the stability of society, as it maintained a balance between freedom and order.

In the new era all these principles were attacked. The Benthamite Radicals, among whom James Mill was prominent, both on account of his influence in the Benthamite circle and his position in the East India Company's establishment, exercised a great influence on the development of the Company's government and in modifying the Cornwallis system. The Evangelicals supported the Radicals in many of their views, but their approach was different. However, through Parliament they brought pressure upon the Company to accede to some of their wishes, and as their ideas spread among the upper classes, many of the higher officials in India began to be guided by them. Different from these was the group of Englishmen who followed the spirit of Burke's conservative philosophy. They were opposed to the liberalism of Cornwallis, and the radical tendencies of Mill and

[1] Stokes, Eric, *The English Utilitarians and India*, p. xiii.

his school. Among them were some of the ablest administrators of the time, such as Munro, Malcolm, Elphinstone and Metcalfe.

II. NATURE OF BRITISH RULE

As more Indian territories fell under British sway, and the problem of extending British administration in the newly conquered lands confronted the authorities, the merits and defects of the Cornwallis system came under debate.

But behind the problems of administration lay the fundamental issue, namely, the nature and end of British rule over India. Such an issue was bound to arise. The process of conquest resembles the surge of a flood which obliterates landmarks and spreads ruin and havoc all round. Conquest is an ugly affair for it is always accompanied by injustice, deceit, brutality and violence. It is an evil which degrades, humiliates and impoverishes the conquered and worsens and corrupts the conqueror. When it is over, both are forced to introspect, the conquered to find explanations for their defeat and to recover their self-respect, the conquerors to justify their violence, and to satisfy their conscience.

The three schools of thought—Benthamite Radical, Evangelical and the Traditionalist—sought each in its own way to fulfil this necessary task.

The Radicals

The Radicals were secular in their outlook and for them the justification for British conquest and rule lay in securing peace and order in a country which was torn by dissensions and fratricidal wars and was groaning under the misrule of nawabs and rajas. They believed in the rule of law which would replace anarchy and create conditions in which people would live happily. For, what they needed most was not liberty or self-government but peace and welfare. Only an omnicompetent State, working through an authoritarian executive endowed with all powers, could maintain order, give the necessary laws which define and protect rights, introduce inexpensive and expeditious judicial processes to uphold them, and establish a political and economic system which would ensure to the individual opportunities of self-realisation as a member of a capitalist society.

The Radicals had no patience with the collectivistic, static Indian

civilisation which was cluttered up with medieval customs, and bound inexorably in the iron chains of caste, a society in which the masses were oppressed by the landlord and the priest. Their remedy was a root and branch transformation through Europeanisation which alone could improve social conditions and prevent political revolution.

In economic matters they were followers of Malthus and Ricardo. They put their faith in the doctrine of *laissez faire*, in individual enterprise and free trade, and they condemned aid or intervention by the state. In matters of land-revenue administration, they opposed the introduction or extension of the British type of landlordism in India and supported direct dealings on the part of the Government with the peasants. James Mill was a strong supporter of the Ricardian theory of rent, and urged upon the Government to stand forth as the landlord and absorb the whole of the economic rent of land, which the economists of the time defined as the difference between the total produce and the wages of labour plus profit on stock.

The Evangelicals

The Evangelicals' point of view was religious. For them temporal welfare and eternal salvation could be attained only through the acceptance of Christianity. They looked upon the British conquest of India as a divine dispensation, a punishment for the sins of the people, for "the abysmal depths of Indian paganism", and as a promise of redemption from "the most depraved and cruel system of superstition which ever enslaved a people".[1] Naturally they aimed at the conversion of the Indian people, and their assimilation to the Christian ways of Europe. But they were not interested merely in saving the souls of the heathens; they wisely reckoned that Anglicisation would stimulate the desire for English goods. The spread of Christian ways was bound to promote the flow of Christian-made commodities. For the achievement of these laudable objects it was necessary that restrictions upon the free entry of English settlers and missionaries and upon the free admission of English merchants and goods, should be removed.

In order to propagate Christianity, it was necessary for the Christian Government to continue and to maintain peace and order so that necessary conditions for the fulfilment of the mission's objective might be created. But they laid great emphasis upon

[1] Coupland, R., *Wilberforce*, p 317

education, for the conquest of the mind was the key to success in every other enterprise.

The Traditionalists

So far as aims were concerned, there was little difference between the Traditionalists and the other two schools. The object of all of them was to strengthen the foundations of British rule. Some of them might entertain the vision of a far-off day when India might be free, and a Macaulay might look upon that day as the most glorious in the history of England, but they had no illusions that this adorable vision could be realised in any forseeable future. Looking at Indian affairs from a practical point of view, they thought that a paternalistic government was the best suited to India. Their theory that power was a trust from Providence supported the view that the British official—the Collector, the Governor, the Governor General—was an olympian god and should be regarded by the subjects as a manifestation of the divine attributes of Preserver, Sustainer and Destroyer, for such a government would be in accord with the Indian tradition. They were opposed to Anglicisation which they regarded impracticable and undesirable. Like Burke they were suspicious of abstract principles. They believed in the continuity of history and culture and deprecated catastrophic changes. Mountstuart Elphinstone, admonishing the Governor General, said, "it is, however, to be remembered that even just government will not be a blessing if at variance with the habits and character of the people."[1] He defended the dispensation of justice by the village Panchayat in these words: "The intimate acquaintance of the members with the subject in dispute, and in many cases with the characters of the parties, must have made their decisions frequently correct, and it was an advantage of incalculable value in that mode of trial that the judges, being drawn from the body of the people, could act on no principles that were not generally understood, a circumstance which, by preventing uncertainty and obscurity in the law, struck at the very root of litigation."[2]

Malcolm in his Instructions to Assistants and Officers, notes: "our power in India rests on the general opinion of the Natives of

[1] Forrest, G W, *Selections From the Minutes and other Official Writings of the Hon. Mountstuart Elphinstone* (London, 1884), p. 57
[2] *Ibid*, p 355

our comparative superiority in good faith, wisdom, and strength, to their own rulers. This important impression will be improved by the considerations we shew to their habits, institutions and religion, by the moderation, temper, and kindness with which we conduct ourselves towards them; and injured by every act that offends their belief or superstition, that shews disregard or neglect of individuals or communities, or that evinces our having, with the arrogance of conquerors, forgotten those maxims by which this great empire has been established, and by which alone it can be preserved."[1]

Their conception of paternal government involved the union of executive and judicial powers, the substitution of individual agency for collective boards, and a ryotwari system of land settlement.

The history of administrative developments

It is not necessary to discuss the details of the proposals put forward by the different protagonists, or the interesting debates in all these matters that took place. But it is desirable to review briefly the outcome of the discussions and describe the shape of the administration as it developed from Cornwallis to Canning.

Act of 1813: Investigation into the affairs of the Company began in 1808, when an enquiry committee of the House of Commons was appointed. It submitted its report after four years, and the Act of 1813, which renewed the Charter of the Company, was based upon it. The main features of the change were that: (i) the monopoly of trade of the Company was abolished except in tea and in trade with China, (ii) the Church establishment was placed under a bishop maintained from the Indian revenues, and (iii) provision was made for granting permission to Englishmen to settle and hold land in India, to the missionaries for introducing useful knowledge and propagating religious and moral improvement, and to traders for their lawful purposes, under a system of licenses.

Act of 1833: Twenty years later, in 1833, the constitution was changed again. The Company's monopoly of tea trade and China trade was taken away and it was required to wind up its commercial business. But its administrative and political powers were continued, as also its patronage over Indian appointments.

So far as the Indian Government was concerned, a fourth member was added to the Council of the Governor General for legislative

[1] Malcolm, J., *A Memoir of Central India*, Vol. II (1880 edition), p. 358

purposes. This was a significant step. It inaugurated a separation between the legislative and executive functions of the Central Government. It put an end to the variety of law-making authorities and judicatures whose spheres of activity were ill-defined. Among these authorities were the Governor General in Council and the Governors in Council of the Presidencies of Bombay and Madras, whose regulations—frequently conflicting—were enforceable only in the Company's courts.

Besides, there were the Hindu and Muslim laws with their variety of texts and interpretations, and lastly the English statutes, common law and equity, applied by the King's courts—the Supreme Courts and the Mayor's courts. The Act of 1833 vested the legislative power exclusively in the Governor General in Council and deprived the governments of the Presidencies of their legislative function. The Governor General was empowered to make laws and regulations for all persons whether British or Indian, foreigners or others, for all courts of justice whether established by charter or otherwise, and for the whole of the territory under British rule. Of course, the permanent right of Parliament to legislate for India was not affected.

The Governor General was directed to appoint an 'Indian Law Commission' to enquire into the administration of justice and into the nature and operation of all laws. Macaulay was appointed the fourth member of the Council and the chairman of the commission. The deliberations of the commission led to the formation of the Indian Penal Code, the Codes of Civil and Criminal Procedure and other codes of substantive and adjectival laws. The emergence of a unified system of laws, a uniform judicial procedure and a uniform judicature, gave a powerful stimulus to the growth of unity in India.

Act of 1853: In 1853 the Charter of the East India Company was renewed for the last time The Council of the Governor General was enlarged for legislation to twelve members who were all salaried officials. They included besides the Governor General and the four Councillors, the Commander-in-Chief, the Chief Justice of Bengal, a puisne judge and four members to represent Bengal, Madras, Bombay and the North-West Provinces (Uttar Pradesh). The meetings of the Legislative Council were made public and its proceedings were published officially.

The Company had ceased to be a commercial concern after 1833 and was merely an instrument of the British crown to carry on the

government of India. This indirect method of governing a vast empire was so illogical that it is a wonder that it lasted three quarters of a century. The Revolt of 1857, however, gave it a death blow, and in 1858 the British crown assumed directly the government of India.

Effects of administrative changes

During the last fifty years of the Company's rule, the edifice of administration was completed. The Regulations for Bengal which Cornwallis had promulgated, served as the foundation. But under the stress of new ideas and circumstances, and in the light of experience, modifications were inevitable when new governments were set up in the different provinces.

The problems that the British administrators had to face were extremely complicated. Their first concern naturally was to safeguard the interests of their own people, and to secure the permanency of their empire. Issues involving the relations between the rulers and the subject race had to be settled. The most important among them were how far Indian traditions were to be approved or rejected, what part should be assigned to the Indians in administration, and what should be the limits of social intercourse between the rulers and the ruled.

The Cornwallis system had sought to find a solution to these. The settlement of land had guaranteed revenue adequate for the dual purpose of administration and investment. The Indians had been deprived of all opportunities of acquiring influence that might threaten authority. But the Permanent Settlement had created new problems. It had created a class of men of property who might prove a potential danger to British rule and the policy of separation of functions tended to weaken the authority of the executive officers and lower the prestige of the Government.

Change in the English attitude after 1793

In so far as cultural and social contacts were concerned, the early Englishmen were merchants and ambassadors who recognised the differences between themselves and Indians, but did not suffer from racial arrogance. Many of them learnt Indian languages, adopted Indian ways and manners, and practised friendly intercourse with them. Warren Hastings knew Persian and Bengali well, and Sir William Jones was an eminent Sanskrit scholar who translated

Kalidasa's *Shakuntala* into English. They participated freely in the entertainments arranged by wealthy Indians, nawabs and rajas. "On both sides there was much give-and-take", says Spear. "The English had long acquired a taste for nautches, and developed new ones for elephant fights and hookah smoking; the Nawabs on their part experimented with English food and drink."[1] Musalmans acquired a liking for ham which they ate under the designation of "Vilayati Hiran" or English venison. Friendships also grew. The Hastings circle included Beneram, his brother Bishambar Pandit, Ganga Gobind Singh, and Ali Ibrahim Khan.

But the Cornwallis regime had marked a change. Reciprocal entertainments had decreased, formation of friendships had ceased, and higher posts had been reserved for Englishmen. Government designs "became more imperial and its attitude more haughty and aloof."[2] With the spread of Radical and Evangelical opinions, the English attitude changed altogether. Tolerance was replaced by contempt and aversion. "A superiority complex was forming which regarded India not only as a country whose institutions were bad and people corrupted, but one which was by its nature incapable of ever becoming any better."[3] It stamped the Indian people individually and collectively, with the mark of inferiority.

The new land settlements

Changes in the methods of administration took place in the new climate of opinion. The extension of the empire necessitated a new type of administrative organisation based on a different system of land-revenue settlement. The Permanent Settlement of Bengal had been decided upon after a protracted debate over its various aspects, but one thing was never in doubt, viz. that the settlement must be made with the zamindars. When, however, the wars in the south brought an accession of territories where the zamindari tenure was not in general use, but was confined to isolated tracts and to local chiefs, the advisability of settling the lands on the model of Bengal was seriously questioned. The defeat of the Marathas and the expansion of the British dominion over the Deccan raised the same problem in this region.

[1] Spear, T G P., *The Nabobs*, p. 131
[2] *Ibid*, p. 136
[3] *Ibid*

The expectations from the zamindari system, moreover, had not been justified. It had been argued that the landlords would prove a bulwark of order and stability, and would entertain a warm and zealous attachment to the Government founded on the solid basis of their own interests.[1] In actual practice the contrary proved to be true. Immediately after the Permanent Settlement both in Bengal and the Northern Sarkars, a struggle commenced between the local governments and the zamindars, which was "not always confined to chicanery, falsehood and flight on the one side, nor to the utmost exercise of civil rigours on the other." The collectors' bailiffs supported by their armed force and sometimes the regular troops, and the zamindars with their own courts, police and means of private defence, faced each other. Instead of cooperating in the matter of administration, the zamindars were not averse to embarrassing the Government. They resented enquiry into their relations with the cultivators, foiled attempts to determine their rights, and prevented the ryots from seeking justice outside their courts. They promoted bribery and corruption, and connived at crime. The zamindari areas were infested with gangs of robbers and dacoits. In the Northern Sarkars there were frequent rebellions of the zamindars.

The system was conducive to a looseness of ties between the government and the people. So long as the zamindar continued to pay the fixed revenue, the Government left him to do what he liked, and the collector just "loomed like Fate in the background and was as little heeded in every day life." The lack of knowledge of the interior and of real contact with the masses affected the Government's capacity to control the country and weakened its authority.[2]

Other disadvantages soon began to be realised. The Permanent Settlement deprived the State of a share in the increase of rent which resulted from the general improvement of the economic conditions, and handed over the entire unearned increment to the zamindar. In the second place, while the settlement favoured a handful of landholders, it completely ignored the interests of the vast mass of the oppressed cultivators whose resentment and dissatisfaction seemed to evoke no sympathy. Munro wrote, "It seems extraordinary

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[1] H Colebrooke's Minute, Para 37, vide *Selection of Papers from Records at East India House*, Vol. I (1820), p. 50

[2] See Carstairs, R., *The Little World of an Indian District Officer* (Macmillan, 1912), Books I, II and IV

that it should ever have been conceived that a country could be as much benefited by giving up a share of the public rent to a small class of Zemindars or mootadars as.........by giving it to ryots, from whom all rent is derived."[1]

Read and Munro led the attack on the Permanent Settlement, and gradually convinced the home authorities of the unwisdom of extending it to other parts of India. The Select Committee of the House of Commons which reviewed the affairs of the East India Company preceding the renewal of their Charter in 1813, decided in favour of the ryotwari settlement.

Munro pressed that "when the settlement of a great province is in view, the prosperity of the body of the people should be the grand object to which everything else should be made to yield."[2] This object, Munro thought, would be best achieved under a ryotwari settlement. To the objection that under the ryotwari system there was no person between the cultivator and the revenue officer, Munro replied: "This objection is made from not understanding the condition of the Indian husbandman; for in this country, the landlord and cultivator can never be permanently separated as in England. The minute division of property will always render them the same person, with very few exceptions. The landlord must always cultivate his own fields; and hence the collections must always be made directly from the cultivator in his quality of landlord, and there can be no person between the cultivator and the revenue officer, without a creation of Zemindars, who must themselves, in time become, either petty princes, or cultivators."[3] There was no need, therefore, of creating a class of contractors, the zamindars—"who undertake to get a greater fixed rent for government from the ryots, than can be done, in any other way."[4]

The ryotwari settlement of the Deccan was supposed to perpetuate the agrarian relations which had existed for centuries in the past. It proposed to confirm the cultivator's proprietary rights in the land that he cultivated, subject to the payment of the Government demand, and thus to combine in him the characters of the labourer, the farmer and the landlord. The system was advantageous both to the Government and to the cultivator. To the former, it ensured the

[1] Firminger, *Fifth Report*, Vol. III, p. 504
[2] *Ibid.*
[3] *Ibid*, p. 505
[4] *Ibid*, p 504

benefit of all future increases of revenue resulting from the extension of cultivation and the rise of prices of agricultural produce. A further advantage was that it helped to win over the mass of the cultivating population to the support of British rule, and free it from dependence upon the support of a few big zamindars. The strength of British rule, it came to be realised, would lie more in the contentment of the masses than in the loyalty of the few who lived by the exploitation of the peasants. Even for the future progress of cultivation, the ryotwari system offered greater promise than the rival zamindari system. Once the peasant was confirmed in his hereditary rights in land, it was argued, he would apply his energy and resources to the improvement and extension of cultivation. The magic of property would encourage enterprise and help to raise the standard of farming.

Munro summed up the case for the ryotwari system in the following words: "It may be also said, that it is better calculated to promote industry, and to augment the produce of the country; because it makes more proprietors and farmers and fewer common labourers, than the Zamindary and mootadary scheme; because the ryot would be more likely to improve his land as a proprietor than as the tenant of a Zamindar; and as he would enjoy the whole remission instead of a small part or perhaps none, he would be more able to do it; and because the small proprietor, being the better manager and farmer, and more immediately interested than the great one in the cultivation of his land, would bestow more pains upon it, and make it yield a more abundant crop: that supposing the amount of the property to be the same, it would be better that it should be in the hands of forty or fifty thousand small proprietors than of four or five hundred great ones; that by the remission going at once to the ryots, it would improve the circumstances of the class of men from whom the revenue is principally drawn, and would enable them to raise a greater quantity of food, and thus to favour the increase of population; that by allowing the revenue to increase or diminish, according to the extent of land in cultivation; it eases the farmer, without occasioning on an average of years, any loss to Government; that this fluctuation would lessen every day as the ryots become more wealthy, and would at last be confined to tank lands; and that the ryotwari system by retaining in the hands of the Government all unoccupied land, gives it the power of gradually augmenting

the revenue, without imposing any fresh burdens upon the ryots, as long as there is an acre of waste in the country."[1]

Ryotwari tenure was the only land system that was possible under the circumstances outside Bengal. To quote Munro again, "it is the system which has always prevailed in India—that no other can be permanent; and that however different any new one may be, it must resolve itself into it at last, because the duration of great property in any family is opposed by early and universal marriage, by the equal division among all the sons, and by adoption where there are none; that it is more simple than the mootadary plan, because it requires no artificial restraints contrary to customs, and the laws of inheritance to prevent the division of estates, because it admits of all gradations of large and small farms."[2]

What distinguished the ryotwari system from the zamindari, was that it substituted for the multiplicity of landholders one zamindar, namely, the Government. It brought the cultivators into direct relations with the Government which functioned as the sole landlord. It interposed no intermediate agency between the workers on the soil and the rulers of the country. It recognised, however, the proprietary rights of the cultivator in the land which he cultivated.

The ryotwari system established the closest relations between the people and the government; for the system required the realisation of rents by the officials directly from each holding. It was necessary that each field should be measured and surveyed, and its boundaries determined, and boundary marks set up. It involved the preparation of field maps, village maps, and taluq maps, and a whole department of the Surveyor General to carry out these duties.

The survey is preliminary to the assessment of the rent of each holding. But the fixation of the amount due is dependent on the calculation of the produce. A classification of soils—wet or dry, agricultural or horticultural—and an enumeration of the particulars concerning the areas occupied by houses, trees, tanks, rivers, nullahs, hills, roads, barren land, wells, graves, etc., is necessary before the amount of produce can be estimated. On the basis of this estimate a settlement has to be made and the agreement (*patta*) drawn up between the Government and the ryot.

[1] Firminger, *Fifth Report*, Vol III, p. 503
[2] *Ibid*, p 503

The collection of the stipulated amount from each cultivator is another elaborate proceeding which brings the officials and the peasants into close contact. Considering that the survey and the settlements have to be annually scrutinised and revised, the intimate and detailed character of the administration becomes evident.

The ryotwari tenure, which was introduced in the Madras and Bombay Presidencies, was supposed to be a close approximation to the old Indian system prevalent in these regions. But the fact is that in fundamentals it departed as much from the ancient usages and customs of the country as the zamindari system of Bengal. It created private property in land, destroyed the unity and cohesion of village life, and exposed the cultivator to the ruthless oppression of the revenue authorities who demanded and enforced payment of the land-revenue even in years of drought when land grew no crops and the cultivator had no resources to pay the Government dues.

Marquis Hastings' victories in the last Maratha war brought the Gangetic valley under British rule, and subsequently the annexation of the Panjab, Oudh and Nagpur completed the British dominion in India.

The settlement of these regions naturally followed. Here new systems were tried which borrowed some features from the zamindari system of Bengal and some from the ryotwari system of the Deccan, but embodied some original elements of their own.

In the Gangetic valley, then named the North-West Provinces (now Uttar Pradesh), the Government entered into agreements for payment of revenue with the villages as units. Under the advice of Holt Mackenzie, the Regulation of 1822 was issued, which established the village system. The essential feature of the system was that the Government made the settlement not with the individual cultivator but with the village community as a whole. Each village was assessed as such and was made responsible for the payment through a responsible person. The individual owners paid their shares for their portions of the estate (mahal) by mutual arrangements to the representative. The assessment was periodically revised, usually after every thirty years. The Muqaddam was the village representative who dealt with the Government. He was assisted by the Patwari who kept the registers and accounts. The collector and the Tahsildar carried out the work of periodical settlements and acted on the information supplied by the Qanungo, the Patwari, and the villagers.

The periodic settlements brought the people into contact with Government officials, but as the settlement was made with the village, and not with the individual, the community's organisation was not disrupted.

In the Panjab a modified mahalwari system was introduced. In the words of John Lawrence, "The proprietors did not engage individually with the Government but by villages. The brotherhood of the village, through its headman or representative, undertake to pay so much for so many years and then having done so, they divide the amount among themselves assigning to each one his quota. Primarily each man cultivates and pays for himself; but ultimately he is responsible for his companions and they for him and they are bound together by a joint liability."[1]

The civil administration and the judiciary

The successors of Cornwallis shifted the emphasis from the adjudication of rights to the preservation of order, from the administration of impersonal law to the exercise of personal discretion, from civilian to military rule. The result was a concentration of authority, which bordered on military discipline.

Cornwallis had vested the magisterial and police control of a district in the judge-magistrate, and the collection of revenue in the collector, under the supervision of the Board of Revenue at Calcutta. The first breach in this system was made in 1829 when the post of Commissioner was created and wide powers were entrusted to him. Each commissioner was placed in charge of a division to supervise the work of the collectors and to superintend the administration of judges, magistrates and the police. He became a judicial officer, too, for the duties of the sessions judge and the Provincial Courts of Appeal, were transferred to him. The Provincial Boards of Revenue and the Provincial Courts of Appeal were abolished.

Two years later, on finding that the charge of a commissioner had become too heavy, changes were effected. The commissioner's criminal jurisdiction was transferred to the district judge, and the magisterial duties of the judge were handed over to the collector. Thus by 1831, although the judiciary was formed into a separate branch of the administration, the executive "was welded into a single chain of command". The collector came to combine in

[1] See *Report on the Administration of the Panjab Territories, 1854-55 to 1855-56*, para 39

himself the functions of magistracy, police and judiciary in rent and revenue cases. A hierarchy of subordinate staff was established to assist the collector.

In this way the paternalistic principles of union of powers and of individual and personal responsibility, replaced the ideas of separation of powers and collective responsibility exercised through boards. "The double institution of the divisional commissioner and district officer permanently modified the Cornwallis structure and supplied the orthodox model for future British colonial administration."[1]

So far as the judiciary was concerned, although its importance was maintained, its pre-eminence was reduced. The main changes after 1793 affected the system in all its grades. In 1801, the Sadr Diwani Adalat and Sadr Nizamat Adalat became separated from the Governor General in Council. In 1811, the Sadr Diwani Adalat was constituted of a Chief Justice and three puisne judges selected from the covenanted servants of the Company. In 1831, the provincial courts of appeal were abolished, and the powers of the district courts were enhanced. They could try original suits of the value of more than Rs. 5,000 and hear appeals from the courts of Sadr Amins. From their judgements appeal lay to the Sadr Diwani Adalat.

On the criminal side, the Sadr Nizamat Adalat was reconstituted. The Governor General in Council ceased to function as a court, and its places was taken by four judges who were assisted by the chief Qazi and two Muftis. In the reforms of 1831, the circuit courts were wound up. At first the commissioners and then the district judges were required to undertake the sessions work and hold gaol deliveries.

On both sides the jurisdiction of Indian judicial officers was extended. On the civil side was institited a principal Sadr Amin, who could hear cases of Rs. 5,000 valuation, and appeals from the lower courts. On the criminal side, the principal Sadr Amin, Munsifs and Sadr Amins, magistrates and their assistants, were authorised to sentence persons convicted of crimes.

After 1832, permission was given to obtain the assistance of Indian Panchs, assessors or jurors, in the trials of civil and criminal suits. Qazis and Muftis were now not considered necessary and their services could be dispensed with, especially in view of the fact

[1] Stokes, Eric, *The English Utilitarians and India*, p. 164

that non-Muslims were exempted from trial under the Muslim law.

There were some changes in the police organisation. The village chaukidars, who were dependent upon the zamindars for their maintenance and were responsible to Daroghas of the *thana* for their duties, did not prove equal to the task. They failed to suppress crime and gang robbery continued to plague the countryside. An attempt was made to appoint respectable persons as Amins to help the Daroghas, but they were not paid any remuneration and soon faded out. The zamindars had been relieved of their authority and were unwilling to resume the duties of crime detection and prevention, which was a thankless task. The office of the Provincial Superintendent of Police was created in 1808, but terminated in 1829. Then the commissioners were entrusted with this work. Two years later the collector-magistrates of the districts obtained the supervision of police arrangements while the actual duties of crime prevention remained in charge of the district superintendents of police who were assisted by the Daroghas.

The army

The expansion of dominion and the relative paucity of Englishmen were responsible for the strengthening of the executive and the employment of Indians in subordinate posts on a large scale. The same needs led to the enlargement of the army. The Marquis of Hastings enumerated the functions of the army as follows:

(1) to guard against the ebullitions among the people, and to maintain military stations throughout the country to give timely aid to the civil authority;
(2) to assist the Indian protected princes from the danger of the uprisings of their subjects;
(3) to keep roads free from robbers and dacoits, and to protect traders;
(4) to offer a career to the numerous disbanded Indian soldiers; and
(5) to counterbalance the armies of independent rulers like the King of Oudh, and the Maharajahs of the Panjab and Gwalior.

It was obviously impossible to bring an adequate number of European troops from the King's army to India, not only because

enough could not be spared from their duties in the other parts of the world—especially as the Napoleonic wars were not over and Europe was in a state of ferment—but mainly because European troops were far too expensive and the Company was constantly complaining against the dumping of such troops at its expense in India.

From the point of view of recruitment, the situation in India was most favourable. India possessed an inexhaustible reservoir of soldiers of good quality; among them were many castes and tribes whose occupation was fighting, and numerous disbanded soldiers from the establishments of the conquered Indian princes. These men were brave fighters; they possessed endurance and were amenable to discipline and training. Their traditions of loyalty to the salt created no conflicts in their devotion to duty and willing obedience to their officers' orders. They were cheap too.

At the departure of Cornwallis, the Company's troops numbered 70,000 of whom the British were only 13,500. By 1826, the number had increased to about 2,81,000 men, of whom 10,541 were Europeans of the Company's army and about 22,000 belonged to the King's forces. On the eve of the Revolt of 1857, the army comprised 3,11,374 men, of whom 45,522 were Europeans.[1] The cheapness of the Indian soldier may be gauged by the fact that the sepoy received a salary of Rs. 7 every month, and his non-commissioned Indian officers Rs. 25 and Rs. 67 per month. In 1856, in the Indian army which was 2,75,000 strong, there were only three Indian officers receiving a salary of Rs. 300 per month.

The anti-Indian policy of Cornwallis found its fullest scope in the army. After 1784, European subalterns were attached to the command of Indian companies. Between 1790 and 1796 a reorganisation was effected in which the European element was increased and each sepoy battalion was given nine European officers. In 1848, a sepoy infantry regiment of 750 or 800 men had a complement of twenty-four European officers, and a regiment of cavalry twenty European officers. By 1826, no Indian could rise to a military command. An Indian risaldar was heard by Sir Henry Lawrence to exclaim, "we live and rot without hope". The displacement of Indian officers was deplored by no less a person than Colonel Wellesley (later the Duke of Wellington).

[1] Ruthnaswamy, M., *Some Influences that made the British Administrative System in India*, *op cit*, pp 127, etc.

Semi-military character of British rule

It was in accord with the general character of British rule that the army played not an ostentatious, but a substantial role in the governance of India. The immediate control and administration of newly-acquired territories was entrusted to the military officers as could be expected in the circumstances, and it is not surprising that the Panjab, Sind and earlier, the ceded districts in the north, the south and in central India were placed in charge of military officers. What is peculiarly interesting is that a number of civil departments were run by the army officers. The political department which dealt with the Indian states was almost wholly monopolised by them. The residencies and agencies were their sole preserve.

Another department which leaned heavily upon the army was that of the Police. In spite of the circulars of the Government condemning the calling up of the military to put down civilian troubles, the magistrates continued to call them up. Their police duties became so numerous that not even half a battalion could remain permanently at the headquarters. The cantonments multiplied and even the dependent stations were occupied. The army personnel accompanied the transit of treasure from one place to another and escorted the transport of stores from Calcutta to other cities. They had to keep prisoners in their custody. In Bengal 'provincial battalions' used to be attached to the police, till the practice was discontinued by Bentinck. In the Bombay Presidency, military guards were posted in northern and southern Khandesh. In the Panjab, 8,100 troops, among whom two-thirds were infantry and one-third cavalry, did the police duties. In Sind also there was policing by the military.

Apart from these essential departments, the army was in charge of many other important functions. They built up the survey department and taught surveying to land-revenue officers. They built roads; and railways for communications were primarily a military concern. Thus the Panjab road system was first laid out to watch the Sikhs, and Dalhousie extended the Grand Trunk Road from Lahore to Peshawar in the interests of defence. The construction of the East Indian Railway was given to a company and its profits guaranteed on condition that the carriage of troops and military stores would be given priority. The North-Western Railway was regarded as the most important line in India from the military and political points of view. It is not necessary to stress the obvious—that the consolidation

of the empire and the increase of the striking power of the army depended essentially on good communications.

The help of the army was also sought in matters of health and sanitation, utilisation of forests, development of irrigation, and execution of public works. Even in land-revenue administration, the services of military officers were utilised. Warren Hastings had often deputed a number of them as farmers of revenue. Read and Munro were the authors of the ryotwari system; Robertson, Briggs, Pottinger, Wingate, Barwell and Sykes made settlements in the Deccan, and Jacob in Sind. Although their employment was discouraged, they still constituted the bulk of officers in charge of collecting land-revenue in the Panjab, Sind and the Central Provinces (Madhya Pradesh).

The semi-military character of the British Government is clearly revealed in these administrative arrangements. The Duke of Wellington testified: "The system of government in India, the foundation of authority, and the modes of supporting it and of carrying on the operations of government are entirely different from the systems and modes adoped in Europe for the same purpose....The foundation and the instrument of all power there is the sword."[1]

It is demonstrated in the appointment of the Governors General. Cornwallis was a soldier with extensive military experience. He had served in the War of American Independence, and, although defeated, had not lost honour. The Marquis of Hastings also had fought in the War of American Independence and in the revolutionary wars in Flanders. Bentinck saw service in the Netherlands, and in Italy with the Austrian forces, and in Spain in the Peninsular War. Hardinge was a veteran of many battles in the struggle against Napoleon, and actually served under the command of Hugh Gough, the Commander-in-Chief of the Indian Army in the Sikh war. Wellesley, Auckland and Ellenborough were more military-minded than even the professional soldiers. They were not only protagonists of the imperialist forward policy, but showered such great favours upon army men that Henry Torrens in doggerel verse, full of sarcasm, remonstrates:

"All but B.C.S. Collectors for their offices sufficient are!
All Moonsiffs are immaculate, all Judges inefficient are!

[1] The Duke of Wellington, *The Marquess Wellesley's Government of India*, quoted by Ramsay Muir, *The Making of British India*, p 209

No military favourite (whatever his condition) errs!
And Colonels of Artillery are heaven-born Commissioners!"[1]

The civil service

The civilian services, however, were the main pillars of the administration. In the beginning, when the Company was purely a mercantile concern, its servants were recruited from the middle and humbler classes. Later 'gentlemen'—peers, knights and squires—became members of the Company and by the beginning of the eighteenth century men of good birth came to be recruited in its service. They entered as apprentices at an early age with hardly any qualification, and after seven years. service were eligible for promotion to the writer's grade. Next to the writers were the grades of the junior factor (later junior merchant) and senior factor (later senior merchant). Their salaries were low. The apprentice received £5, the writer £10, the junior factor £20, and the senior factor £30 to £40 annually. They were, however, permitted to supplement their incomes by investment in the stock and private trading.

Between 1744 and 1765, the Company of merchants became transformed into rulers of provinces as a result of the wars in the Deccan and Bengal. The acquisition of the Diwani of Bengal, Bihar and Orissa added governmental functions to its trading activities. The task fell on the writers, factors, and merchants of the Company who were quite unqualified for such duties. The thirty years after Plassey were a period of confusion, in which the worst instincts of self-aggrandisement had full sway. The results were terrible. The province of Bengal was devastated, and although the servants enriched themselves, the Company suffered great losses. What is worse, its future interests were jeopardised.

From Clive onwards efforts were made to set matters right. In order to mitigate the evils of bribery, corruption and illicit trade, it was necessary to raise the salaries, and to resist the pressure of influential people in making appointments. Clive's scheme of creating a fund out of the monopoly of salt to increase the salaries was turned down by the Directors. But they themselves increased the salaries of the senior servants. The remunerations fixed in 1772-73 raised the emoluments of the Governor of Bengal to £23,000 per year, and

[1] O'Malley, L.S.S., *The Indian Civil Service*, p. 51

those of the members of the Council from £1,500 to £3,000 according to their rank.

In 1793, the question was permanently decided. The junior grades of assistants were given Rs. 300, 400 and 500 a month, and the collector drew Rs. 1,500 with a commission of about one per cent on his collections of revenue, up to a maximum of Rs. 27,500 a year.

Cornwallis made great efforts to purify the services, and firmly put his foot down on the vicious practice of awarding posts to unworthy favourites of eminent and influential men. Wellesley desired to improve the quality of the young civil servants and he opened the Fort William College at Calcutta. The intention was to arrange a three-year comprehensive course in subjects which were regarded necessary for the cadets. Unfortunately, Wellesley had offended the Directors and the plan had to be modified so that the College became a school of oriental languages. But the Directors realised the importance of higher education and founded the Haileybury College, which gave a two years; course. At first the age of entrance was fifteen, but in 1833 it was raised to seventeen. The maximum age was fixed at twenty-one. The object of the College was to turn out officers who realised that "there were certain traditions to be kept up and handed over,...a political faith to be cherished, and a code of public and private honour to be rigidly maintained "[1] Blunt adds, "so long as the I.C.S. continues in the Haileybury tradition, it cannot go far wrong."[2] But in 1853, on Macaulay's proposal, appointment to the civil service was taken away from the Directors, and it was decided that selection should be made through competitive examinations alone. The first examination was held in 1855. The College was closed in 1857.

The reforms created the steel frame which sustained the British empire in India for over a hundred and fifty years. The service was indeed a wonderful invention of the practical genius of the British race. It was costly, as it was the highest paid permanent service in the world. But it was imbued with pride; its powers and responsibilities were great and its demands on the versatility of its members truly astonishing. It had the sense of a mission, for it believed to be divinely ordained to spread the blessings of *Pax Britannica* over vast

[1] Blunt, Sir E., *The I.C.S.* (London, 1937), pp. 35-36
[2] *Ibid.*, p. 36

lands and innumerable human beings. It gave to India a system of government which was a 'miracle of organisation'.

The consequences of British rule

The immediate consequences of the new system of administration were dismal in the extreme. The complete elimination of Indians from the higher services and their total exclusion from any share in government had the most untoward effects both immediately and in the long run. Of the unfairness and unwisdom of such arrangements some of the high officials of the Company were conscious. Wellesley wrote to the Court of Directors: "It is a radical imperfection in the constitution of our establishments in India, that no system appears to have been adopted with a view either to conciliate the goodwill or to control the disaffection of this description of our subjects, whom we found in possession of the Government, and whom we have excluded from all share of emolument, honour, and authority, without providing any adequate corrective of those passions incident to the loss of dignity, wealth and power."[1]

Munro, in his minute dated August 12, 1817, to Lord Hastings says: "The strength of the British Government enables it to put down every rebellion, to repel every foreign invasion, and to give its subjects a degree of protection which those of no Native power enjoy. Its laws and institutions also afford them a security from domestic oppression, unknown in those states; but these advantages are dearly bought. They are purchased by the sacrifice of independence of national character, and of whatever renders a people respectable. The Natives of the British provinces may, without fear, pursue their different occupations. . . and enjoy the fruits of their labour in tranquillity; but none of them can aspire to anything beyond this mere animal state of thriving in peace—none of them can look forward to any share in the legislation or civil or military government of their country. It is from men who either hold, or are eligible to public office, that Natives take their character; where no such men exist, there can be no energy in any other class of the community. The effect of this state of things is observable in all the British provinces, whose inhabitants are certainly the most abject race in India. No elevation of character can be expected among men who, in the

[1] Wellesley to the Court of Directors, April 22, 1799, see Thompson and Garratt, *The Rise and Fulfilment of British Rule in India* (1958 edition), p. 207

military line, cannot attain to any rank above that of subahdar, where they are as much below an ensign as an ensign is below the commander-in-chief, and who, in the civil line, can hope for nothing beyond some petty judicial or revenue office, in which they may, by corrupt means, make up their slender salary." He adds, "The consequence, therefore, of the conquest of India by the British arms would be, in place of raising, to debase the whole people. There is perhaps no example of any conquest in which the Natives have been so completely excluded from all share of the Government of their country as in British India."

Then again on November 12, 1818, he wrote, "Foreign conquerors have treated the Natives with violence, and often with great cruelty, but none has treated them with so much scorn as we; none have stigmatised the whole people as unworthy of trust, as incapable of honesty, and as fit to be employed only where we cannot do without them. It seems to be not only ungenerous, but impolitic, to debase the character of a people fallen under our dominion." He concludes, "The exclusion from offices of trust and emoluments has become a part of our system of government, and has been productive of no good."[1]

A few years later, Munro reflected on the probable condition of Britain if subjected to such a rule as that of which he himself had been an instrument in India in these words: "Let Britain be subjugated by a foreign power to-morrow, let the people be excluded from all share in the Government, from public honours, from every office of high trust or emolument, and let them in every situation be considered as unworthy of trust, and all their knowledge and all their literature, sacred and profane, would not save them from becoming in another generation or two, a low-minded, deceitful, and dishonest race."[2]

Elphinstone stated, "It may be alleged with more justice that we dried up the fountains of native talent, and that from the nature of our conquest not only all encouragement to the advancement of knowledge is withdrawn, but even the actual learning of the nation is likely to be lost and the productions of former genius to be forgotten."[3]

[1] Thompson, Edward, *The Making of the Indian Princes*, p 273

[2] Quoted by Reginald Reynolds, *The White Sahibs in India*, p. 65; also Romesh Dutt, *The Economic History of India under Early British Rule* (sixth edition), p. 163

[3] Forrest, G. W., *Selections from the Minutes and other Official Writings of Elphinstone*, p. 102

Malcolm, at the close of the Maratha wars, remarked: "Our present condition is one of apparent repose, but full of danger." Then he added, "There are many causes which operate to make a period like this one of short duration; and the change to a colder system of policy, and the introduction of our laws and regulations into countries immediately dependent upon us, naturally excite agitation and alarm. It is the hour in which men awake from a dream. Disgust and discontent succeed to terror and admiration and the princes, the chiefs, and all who had enjoyed rank or influence, see nothing but a system dooming them to immediate decline and ultimate annihilation.

"The establishment of the British authority over Central India, though recognised at first by almost all classes as a real blessing because it relieved them from intolerable evils, begins already to be regarded by the princes, the chiefs and the military portion of the community, with very mixed sentiments, among which serious apprehensions as to the permanence of their present condition are predominant.

"The same classes of men do not fill the same places in society under our governments, as they did under a Native prince; nor are men actuated by similar motives. Our administration, though just, is cold and rigid. If it creates no alarm, it inspires little, if any, emulation. The people are protected, but not animated or attached. It is rare that any native of India living under it can suffer injury or wrong; but still more rare that he can be encouraged or elevated by favour or distinction."[1]

All avenues to fame, wealth or power were closed to Indians; no opportunities were left for public service, or the performance of the citizen's duties, to defend the country or to advance its prosperity. Munro had forecast that such exclusion would foment a spirit of discontent or opposition, and if it did not do so, then the people "would sink in character...and would degenerate into an indolent and abject race, incapable of any higher pursuit than the mere gratification of their appetites."[2]

He rightly observed that "he who loses his liberty loses half his virtue...The enslaved nation loses the privileges of a nation as the

[1] Thompson, Edward, *The Making of the Indian Princes*, p 272

[2] Quoted by Romesh Dutt, *The Economic History of India under Early British Rule*, p 163

slave does those of a freeman; it loses the privilege of taxing itself, of making its own laws, of having any share in their administration, or in the general government of the country. British India has none of these privileges."[1]

A deadly pall hung over India, under which the classes were smothered and the masses breathed with difficulty. The Muslim and Hindu ruling princes were disarmed and isolated; the Muslim and Hindu families, tribes and castes which had provided soldiers, administrators and leaders, were ostracised from offices of responsibility, and condemned to serve as helots; the Muslim and Hindu learned classes were deprived of patronge and slowly squeezed out of their avocations. So far as the masses were concerned, excessively heavy assessments, severity of realisation, growth of population, and the pressure upon land, depressed the miserable standards of living of the peasants, while the economic policies of the rulers brought ruin upon Indian artisans and craftsmen, so that many of them sank to the position of landless labourers, while the obstacles placed in the way of industrial development prevented the creation of fresh avenues of employment. Writing in 1837, about the commercial policy of England, Montgomery Martin said, "we have done everything possible to impoverish still further the miserable beings subject to the cruel selfishness of English commerce."[2]

It was perhaps necessary that in order that the new might be born, the old should suffer an agonising and violent death.

[1] *Ibid.*, p. 165
[2] *Ibid*, p. 289

CHAPTER NINE

SOCIAL AND ECONOMIC CONSEQUENCES OF BRITISH RULE: DISINTEGRATION OF RURAL ECONOMY

The British conquest of India was different in character from all the previous conquests of the country. In the past the change of rulers implied merely a change of the dynasty that exercised political authority over the people, but it did not affect the social fabric, the productive organisation, the property relations or the system of administration. Under British rule all this was altered, and a socio-economic revolution was started which culminated in the destruction of the old institutions and in the emergence of new social classes and forces.

Land tenures

Now in countries where the economy is predominantly agricultural, the main source of the people's income is land, and the people pay a portion of their produce to their rulers for the services of law and order, defence and protection. In the pre-capitalist conditions of Indian society this payment acquired the character of sharing of the produce between the village and the government. The village stood for a cooperative group in which functions were fixed by tradition and custom and the individual was merged in the collectivity. But the ruler and the villager were interested principally in the use of the land and neither was worried about its ownership, for uncultivated waste land was as free as water and air. Under the circumstances the problem of individual rights scarcely emerged, rent and revenue were regarded as customary dues and the idea of taxation was absent. The relations based upon the exploitation of land and the distribution of its products determined the activity of the people and their economic and social relations. Therefore the structure of society and the form and functions of the State were determined by them.

The social framework of an agrarian economy and the production and distribution of wealth are conditioned by land tenures. The British introduced new forms of land tenures in India when they made their early settlements, and these brought in their wake a revolution in the economic and social relations in the countryside.

When the Diwani or the land-revenue administration of the lower provinces was transferred to the East India Company in 1765, the merchants of the Company were absolutely unprepared for the exercise of any administrative functions of this nature. Clive was obliged to continue the old arrangements for collecting revenue, and he left the task to the Deputy Diwan of the Nawab of Bengal. This proved unsatisfactory and Warren Hastings on assuming the governorship of the Presidency divested the Deputy of his functions in 1772. Then began a period of trial and error, in evolving a satisfactory system of land-revenue and fixing the responsibility for its payment. In the course of discussion many abstract questions were raised, for instance, who was the owner of agricultural land in India; who was ultimately responsible for the payment of revenue to the State; what was the share of the State in the produce of land; and were the zamindars or revenue farmers of Mughal times the proprietors owning land or merely intermediaries between the cultivator and the State ?

Warren Hastings proceeded on the assumption that all land belonged to the sovereign, and that the intermediaries were merely agents who were entitled only to a commission for collecting the rents from the cultivators. It followed that the existing zamindars could be allowed to continue only if they undertook to pay the amount of land-revenue that the bidders in the open market offered for it. In the auctions the old zamindars were treated on par with the fresh bidders so as to realise the maximum possible amount of land-revenue. The result was that most of the lands in Bengal were farmed out to the new bidders. Thus many of the old zamindar families were ousted, "an old-established link between government and the cultivator of the soil" was severed, and the old relationship between the zamindars and their tenants was seriously impaired.

The discomfiture of the zamindars was further aggravated by the excessiveness of the demand and the harsh methods of realisation employed by the collectors under government orders. Nor did the cultivators escape, for they were the final victims of over-assessment and of the greed of the new farmers. The effect was the wholesale ejectment and oppression of the ryots by the farmers—"defaulting zamindars, absconding farmers, and deserting ryots". This was the first breach in the rural organisation of India.

The deplorable conditions created by Hastings' measures brought into open discussion the assumptions regarding the ownership of land. Philip Francis propounded the view that the zamindar and not the sovereign was the real proprietor of land. He was opposed by Warren Hastings. The effect of these discussions was that from 1777 to 1783 new schemes were formulated which increased the importance of the zamindar at the expense of the cultivator. Then in 1793 Cornwallis decided to proclaim the Permanent Settlement of Bengal.

Under the Permanent Settlement of 1793 the zamindar was declared the absolute owner and proprietor of his estate. He was permitted to appropriate the whole of the rental to himself after defraying the dues of the government. In the beginning his share was small—only eleven per cent of the rental—so that he was obliged to part with the major portion of his income to the State. But while the land-revenue demand was fixed, the rent realised by the landlord from the cultivator was left unsettled and unspecified. This provided the zamindar with the opportunity to squeeze the cultivator to the limit of the latter's capacity. In this way the immediate aim of the government to receive the economic rent from the soil was realised.

But eventually the Permanent Settlement benefited the zamindar more than the government. For, with the growth of population, the extension of cultivation, the rise of prices, and the growing scarcity of land, the zamindar's position improved. His title to the succession of an estate did not now require the execution of any deed of investiture or the payment of any *peshkash* or *nazrana* for its ratification, as had been the case in the past. He could transfer or alienate his landed property by sale, mortgage or gift without requiring the permission of any superior authority. He was relieved from the vexatious regulations of the Mughal administration, which very much limited his authority and obliged him to collect cesses over and above the land-revenue demand, and to furnish accounts of receipts and disbursements. But the British-created zamindar was divested of all political and public duties. He ceased to be the feudal aristocrat of the Mughals, and was transformed into a petty capitalist, "a mushroom gentleman".

The erstwhile revenue farmers became the proprietors of estates or landlords in the English sense of the term, possessing the same

rights in land in India that the landowners did in Britain. For instance, while the State and the revenue farmers in India did have a claim to a part of the produce, they did not enjoy the right of dispossessing the cultivator of his holdings or raising the rent of the land arbitrarily. In fact, before the British conquest, the distinction between the rent paid to the landlords and the land-revenue collected by the State hardly existed in any part of the country. The Permanent Settlement destroyed the old relationship and invested the zamindars with proprietary rights.

The change in the status and functions of the zamindar or landholder also affected the socio-political organisation of the Indian village, destroying eventually its isolation and self-sufficiency. Two principal results of the change were : (i) the creation of absolute property in land and its transfer into the hands of the new moneyed class which had no interest in land other than that of getting the maximum return on the investments, and (ii) the sub-infeudation of estates and holdings so that, as the competition for land increased, there emerged a chain of middlemen and intermediary rent-receiving interests between the original landlord and the cultivator.

The changes had begun with Murshid Quli Khan, who had replaced many old jagirdars and taluqdars with new farmers—largely Hindus. Thus at the time of the British conquest of the province, most of the zamindar families of Bengal could trace their origin only to the early days of his rule, although there were a few who could claim continued possession for more than a century or a century and a half. Warren Hastings caused a further revolution in the composition of this class by his land-revenue settlements. He introduced the method of assessment by auctioning the zamindaris. The severity of such assessments and the rigidity of collection worsened the situation. The enactment of the Permanent Settlement in 1793 completed the process. What ensued during the period of twenty-two years following the Settlement was that half of the landed property of Bengal changed hands by sale and most of the transferred lands went to new purchasers—the merchants and moneyed classes of Calcutta.

In this manner the first generation of zamindars created by the Permanent Settlement had a short shrift. The heaviness of assessment and the rigid law of sales proved most devastating for them. The following facts throw some light on the incidence of land-revenue in Bengal during the early British period:—

				Land-revenue assessment
Todarmal's	assessment	(1596)	..	Rs. 107 lakhs
Murshid Quli Khan's	,,	(1722)	..	Rs. 145 ,,
Allahwardi Khan's	,,	(1755)	..	Rs. 186 ,,
Mir Qasim's ..	,,	(1763)	..	Rs. 256 ,,
Cornwallis' ..	,,	(1793)	..	Rs. 286 ,,

In interpreting this table it has to be remembered that the actual realisation under the Nawabs rarely came up to the assessed amount, for large arrears were left from year to year. On the other hand, the Company's arrears were never more than 2½ per cent. Thus "the land-revenue collected by the Mughal's agents in Bengal in 1764-65 amounted in value to £ 818,000; in 1765-66, the first year of East India Company's financial administration, it rose to £ 1,470,000. By the year 1790-91 it had been forced up to £ 2,860,000, and it was on the basis of that year's collection that the Permanent Settlements were made."[1]

In 1793, the Company's share of the total rental collected by the zamindars came to 89 per cent while in England, at the same time, the government demand amounted to between 5 to 10 per cent of the net rental. The share of the Indian zamindar was, in fact, the barest minimum to compensate him for the troubles of collection, for discharging obligations towards the government and for defraying his personal expenses.

The worst feature of the system of realisation was that the government revenue had to be deposited by the zamindar with rigid punctuality before sunset of the appointed day. If the payment was not made at the stroke of the hour, the zamindar was dispossessed, and a part or the whole of the estate was seized and sold by public auction. No excuse was entertained, no allowance was made for any difficulties. But while the government realised its dues at the point of bayonet, the zamindar had no power to constrain the cultivator to pay the rent in time. According to the Collector of Midnapur, "they all (the zamindars) say, that such a harsh and oppressive system was never before resorted to in this country; .... The system of sales and attachments ... has in the course of a very few years reduced most of the great zamindars in Bengal to distress and beggary; and produced

[1] Beauchamp, J., *British Imperialism in India*, p. 24

greater change in the landed property of Bengal, than has, perhaps, ever happened in the same space of time, in any age or country, by the mere effect of internal regulations."[1]

The alienation of estates by the existing zamindars assumed alarming proportions during the first few years of the Permanent Settlement. In 1796, lands carrying a rental of Rs. 28,70,061 on the roll and representing one-tenth of the three provinces were sold in one year.[2] According to Baden-Powell, in the two years between 1796-7 and 1797-8, the sale of estates yielding 14 lakhs and 22·7 lakhs respectively was effected, and "by the end of the century the greater portion of the estates of the Nadiya, Rajshahi, Bishnpur and Dinajpur Rajas had been alienated. The Burdwan estate was seriously crippled and Birbhum zamindars completely ruined. A host of smaller zamindaris shared the same fate. In fact, it is scarcely too much to say that, within the ten years that immediately followed the Permanent Settlement, a complete revolution took place in the constitution and ownership of the estates which formed the subject of that Settlement."[3]

The distress of the zamindars led the Government to help them by passing the notorious Regulations of 1799. The new law invested the zamindar with arbitrary powers to eject the cultivator, attach his agricultural stock and implements for non-payment of arrears, and start other proceedings against him with a view to pressing him to his utmost capacity. The law of 1799, on the one hand, opened the floodgates of exploitation of the helpless peasantry, and on the other, confirmed the revenue farmer as absolute proprietor of the estate.

The second effect of the changes wrought by the Permanent Settlement was the sub-infeudation of zamindari rights. The process was rapid. In thirty-nine districts of Bengal and Bihar, the number of estates multiplied in twenty years to the high figure of 1,10,456. Of these estates ·4 per cent were large (over 20,000 acres each), 11 per cent of medium size (between 500 and 20,000 acres) and 88 per cent small (less than 500 acres). In England, on the contrary, 2·4 per cent of the estates were of the average area of 13 acres, 12 per cent of 180 acres, and 85·6 per cent of 4,260 acres.[4] In twenty years, the

[1] Letter dated February 12, 1802, vide *Fifth Report* (Firminger, Vol. I), p. 108
[2] Mill, *History of British India*, Vol V, p 367
[3] Macneile, J , *Memorandum on the Revenue Administration of the Lower Provinces of Bengal* (Calcutta, 1873), p 9
[4] Philips, H A.D., *Our Administration of India* (1886), p 5, footnote, table (percentages worked out by the author)

number of estates had doubled in the Patna division and trebled in the Tirhut division.

The tendency to subdivision was accentuated by the Regulations. Under the Mughals the head of the family was chosen as the zamindar. The British gave up the practice, and admitted the existence of private property in land, to which the Indian laws of inheritance applied. This soon led to the division of property among coparceners. The danger of the holdings becoming smaller in size and uneconomical to cultivate was realised as early as 1808 by the Court of Directors, but then no remedy was applied. As there was no alternative avenue of employment for the younger children of the zamindars, primogeniture could not be introduced in India, and the partition of property could not be prevented.

Not only the units of cultivation but the rent-collecting rights also came to be subdivided. The new zamindari rights proved valuable property and only twenty years after the Permanent Settlement, the zamindar's interests which amounted to no more than eleven per cent of the revenue assessment, were being sold for nearly twenty-eight years' purchase. "It follows, therefore," the Court of Directors wrote, "that the Zamindars' allowances must, from the beginning, have greatly exceeded their nominal amount, or that their emoluments must have subsequently been increased by arbitrary exaction, or that, in the interval, the agricultural prosperity of the country and the value of the landed property must have advanced with a rapidity, perhaps beyond example."[1] Be that as it may, the fact is that rent-receiving rights came to have a value which they did not possess before and became a commodity to be freely bought and sold in the market. Instead of the land being a source of production and livelihood for the cultivator, it became an object of speculative investment and a source of profit to the moneyed class. The zamindar farmed out his revenue to a middleman (*patnidar*), who, in turn, contracted with a sub-farmer (*dar patnidar*), and the latter, too, entered into dealings with a number of underlings (*seh patnidars*), and so on. A chain of rent-receiving interests was, thus, created and the evil assumed such ugly proportions that some holdings in Bengal are said to have got at the time of the abolition of zamindari as many as one hundred and fifty intermediary interests between the original

[1] Revenue Letter to Bengal, dated October 28, 1814, para 39, vide *Selection of Papers from Records at East India House* (1820), Vol. I, p 166

landlord and the actual cultivator. Each sub-agent tried to squeeze the next man in the chain to the utmost and the burden of all exactions ultimately fell on the cultivator.

This revolution in property relations was a fact of great consequence to the country. It led to the emergence of new social classes—(i) the rich landlords who looked upon the land as their private property to be used for the maximum monetary return, and (ii) the dispossessed cultivators who were left with nothing but their labour to sell to earn their livelihood.

The intermediaries were, of course, not all rich. The interest of each was small and their economic position, so far as income was concerned, was only slightly better than that of the cultivator. The process of sub-infeudation thus levelled the zamindar, the intermediary and the cultivator. Sir H. Strachey, commenting on the situation, remarked, "By us all is silently changed. The ryot, and the Zemindar, and the *gomashtah*, are by the levelling power of the Regulations very much reduced to an equality."[1]

There was consequently a clash of interests between the two classes; and what is more, there was nothing in common between them. The new landlords, in most cases, were businessmen who purchased land in search for profitable investment of surplus funds. They were unfamiliar with the affairs of cultivation and were uninterested in the work of agricultural improvement, which was left to the cultivator who had neither the means, nor the knowledge, nor the will to carry it out.

In Europe, the agricultural revolution was brought about by investments and improvements in land made by enterprising landlords; in India, the landlords were mere rent-receiving absentee businessmen who cared more for their rents than for the improvement of agriculture. Instead of being natural leaders of the rural population, the landlords in India in the days of the Company played the role of agents to the foreign political power. Against a guarantee of regular payment of a fixed amount of land-revenue to the government, they purchased the right of exacting whatever they could from the politically defenceless and economically weak peasantry.[2] In the past,

[1] Mill, *History of British India*, Vol V, pp 371-72

[2] That private property in land and a new landowning class were created in India with a view to securing the government revenue, may be seen from the following statement of Thomas Munro, Principal Collector of Ceded Districts (vide para 2 of the letter dated August 15, 1807 Extract-Proceedings, Board of Revenue at Fort St George,

the ryot in India had united in his own person the characters of labourer, farmer and landlord; the British land-revenue system separated the characters of labourer and farmer from that of landlord, and thus created the two classes of the exploiters and the exploited.

Exploitation of the peasantry and the backwardness of agriculture

One of the worst consequences of the new Regulations was the subjection of the cultivator to untold misery. The new landlords were unlike the old zamindars. They had no roots in the village. They were a class of rentiers who were only interested in the realisation of the profits on their investments. They were unjust to their ryots. At one stroke they wiped out the traditional rights of occupancy of the cultivators, reduced them to the position of tenants-at-will and subjected them to rack-renting and ejectment. They appropriated the whole surplus of the land, leaving just enough for the subsistence of the tenants.

In short, the system established by Cornwallis led to the creation of property in land in the Western sense. The frequent sales of the estates converted the ancient divided land rights into a marketable commodity, consolidated and exclusively owned by individuals. But the new proprietors of the estates were no longer an order bound to the interests of their villages and their ryots. Many purchasers of the estates were absentee landlords living in cities, who never visited their estates and whose agents did not share the life of the tenants.

The money-lender and the ryotwari settlements

The consequences which followed the introduction of the ryotwari system in Madras and Bombay were equally revolutionary. Only, instead of the zamindar, the peasant became the proprietor. The recognition of private property in land gave him the rights of lease, mortgage and sale—rights which he had either not possessed in the past, or which were strictly circumscribed. Unfortunately, the acqui-

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February 4, 1808 (*Selection of Papers from Records at East India House*, Vol I, 1820, pp. 94-95)

"There is some difficulty in ascertaining what proportion of the gross or net produce of the soil ought to be left to the landholder in order to render the land private property and saleable, so as to be security for the rent of the Government. Had the public revenue in India ever been paid by the private landowners, the share of the produce which was then received by the sovereign might now have served as a standard to regulate the demand *But nothing can be plainer than that private landed property has never existed in India, excepting on the Malabar coast*"

sition of these valuable rights failed to improve his condition. For the government loaded him with such heavy demands as to leave only an exiguous return. Therefore, in the first instance, the value of landed property was reduced to a point where its purchase in the market became unprofitable.

The Government, however, soon realised the folly of exorbitant assessments, and undertook a process of downward revision, so that eventually the holder of land came to enjoy a surplus of rent over the revenue paid to the Government. Immediately land values registered an increase; property began to yield profit, and attract the investor. In Bengal, the moneyed class made outright purchases of zamindari rights; in Bombay and Madras it was inexpedient to oust the cultivator, so the money-lender brought the lands and crops under control by loans. This became possible because the rigid revenue collection forced the cultivator to pay the Government demand even in a year when the crop had failed. His ignorance and improvidence were exploited by the money-lender who offered the facilities of credit on terms which enmeshed him in perpetual debt.

Once the farmer was in the money-lender's clutches, the latter used all the chicanery and cunning that he had at his command, to keep his victim in bondage. Interest rates were fixed so high that the cultivator was at best able to pay only the interest on the loan; the repayment of the principal with fluctuating and low levels of income was generally beyond his capacity. Even if a debtor by extraordinary industry and prudence tried to repay the loan and free himself, he was not allowed to do so, for the accounts were manipulated and the documents forged so that the arrears of interest accumulated more rapidly than their repayment by the debtor. The cultivator found himself helpless, for he could turn nowhere for protection. The courts were, of course, open to him, but under the judicial system introduced by the British, he had hardly any chance of success against his creditor. He did not possess the resources to fight a protracted law suit. And even when he ventured upon that course, he found himself confronted with documents, bearing his thumb impressions, about the contents of which he was generally ignorant. The courts, steeped in the British system of justice, accepted the documents and account books of the money-lender as valid proof of the debt and awarded decrees on such false evidence as the creditor produced in the court. If the cultivator did not go to the court, the money-lender kept his

lien on the produce of the land which he purchased from the debtor at less than the market prices. But if the cultivator went to the court, he usually found himself deprived of his holding in discharge of his obligations to the money-lender. The zamindari system had revolutionised the relations between landlords (revenue farmers) and tenants; the ryotwari system revolutionised the relations between creditor and debtor and thus introduced another grasping and exploiting element into the rural society.

Henceforth there began a perpetual struggle between the two classes, money-lenders and cultivators, the former trying to obtain the larger proportion of the annual produce of the industry of the latter. The money-lender helped by British rules and British laws[1] easily succeeded in achieving his object. As Captain Wingate remarked in 1852, "this miserable struggle between creditor and debtor is thoroughly debasing to both. . . . It is disheartening to contemplate, and yet it would be weakness to conceal the fact that this antagonism of classes and degradation of the people, which is fast spreading over

[1] Captain Wingate, Revenue Survey Commissioner, Bombay, showed remarkable insight into the problem of the deterioration of the relations between creditor and debtor when he explained how debts of the agriculturists had increased in the Deccan under British Rule (vide letter No 319 of September 24, 1852, from Captain G Wingate to the Registrar of the Courts of Sadr Diwani Adalat, Bombay) "It may then be affirmed that for all practical purposes, the relations between debtor and creditor were determined under the Mahrattas without reference to any legal means of enforcing payment of debts The creditor trusted chiefly to the honesty and good faith of his debtor, and it followed as a matter of necessity that loans were sparingly granted unless upon the security of property, such as jewels left in pawn, or a mortgage on land or houses or standing crops In agricultural villages, the relations between the money-lender and the cultivators were those of mutual interest and confidence The *Bania* advanced the cultivator as much as he felt satisfied that he could and would pay, but no more, and at no higher rate of interest than was sanctioned by usage and public opinion If the *Bania* had insisted on a higher rate than was deemed equitable, it is not probable that his debtors would have paid up their instalments with usual regularity, and he had no means of compulsion at his command Under these arrangements, the village money-lender and the ryot worked in harmony, and both alike shared prosperity and adversity together.

"Under our system this happy and mutually advantageous state of affairs has been completely overturned. The prosperity of the ryot is no longer necessary to the prosperity of the village money-lender. The latter has no longer occasion to trust to the good faith or honesty of the former. Mutual confidence and goodwill have been succeeded by mutual distrust and dislike. The money-lender has the ever-ready expedient of a suit at law to obtain complete command over the person and property of his debtor It becomes the interest of the former to reduce the latter to a state of hopeless indebtedness in order that he may be able to appropriate the whole fruits of his industry beyond what is indispensable to a mere existence This he is enabled without difficulty to do So long as a ryot is not much involved the money-lender is ready to afford him the means of indulging in any extravagance and without troubling him at all about future repayment. The debt may lie over and he may choose his own time for repayment. The simple and thoughtless ryot is easily inveigled into the snare, and only becomes aware of his folly when the coils are fairly around him and escape is impossible. From that day forward, he becomes the bondsman of his creditor The latter takes care that he shall seldom do more than reduce the interest of his debt Do what he will, the poor ryot can never get rid of the principal. He toils that another may rest, and sows that another may reap." (Vide *Deccan Riots Commission Report*, Vol. II, pp.87-88)

the land, is the work of our laws and our rule. The corruption and impoverishment of the mass of the people for the enriching of a few has already made a lamentable advance in some districts, and is in progress in all, and the evil is clearly traceable, in my opinion, to the enormous power which the law places in the hands of the creditor." As to the class of money-lenders, Captain Wingate went on to testify that "a set of low usurers is fast springing up, by whom small sums are lent for short period at enormous rates of interest to the very lowest of the population who have not credit enough to obtain advances from the more respectable of village bankers."[1]

In some districts in the Deccan and in northern India, the earlier settlement officers made a mahalwari or joint-village settlement. This type of settlement was in conformity with the ancient practice of the country. But, from the very beginning, the intention with regard to this form of settlement was to treat it as a transitional measure and establish ultimately the ryotwari system instead. As the Madras Board of Revenue observed in 1818: "The village settlement, however, though it commenced by fixing the assessment on each village and making over the lands to the people collectively or to the head of the village, expressly contemplated its gradual subdivision and distribution, not indeed upon each field but upon the entire lands of each Ryot, and consequently the gradual conversion of the collective into an individual settlement wherever the interests of the village community would admit of this change. One of the chief advantages of the ryotwari system was thus engrafted on the village settlement, but the measure was not to be universally or immediately introduced. The people were not to be constrained to adopt an arrangement, which, however abstractedly expedient, was in a great number of cases at variance with the landed tenures, the ancient institutions, and the circumstances of the inhabitants. It was hoped that as their means improved, the obstacles to this arrangement would be overcome, and accordingly it was to be rather promoted than introduced by the collectors."[2]

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[1] Letter No. 319, dated September 24, 1852, to the Registrar, Sadr Diwani Adalat, Bombay, vide *Deccan Riots Commission Report*, Vol. II, pp 88-89

[2] Minute dated January 5, 1818, para 286, vide *Selection of Papers from the Records at East India House* (1820), Vol. I, p. 946

The emergence of the Indian middle class

The intended political result of the ryotwari system may best be stated in the words of Thackeray. In defending the system he observed: "As we generally see Indian affairs with English eyes, and carry European notions into Indian practice, it may be necessary to say a little respecting the gradation of ranks, or in other words, the inequality of conditions which is supposed by some to be necessary in a well ordered society. . . . .

"This equality of conditions in respect to wealth in land; this general distribution of the soil among the yeomanry, therefore, if it be not most adapted to agricultural improvement, is best adapted to attain improvement in the state of property, manners and institutions, which prevail in India; and it will be found still more adapted to the situation of the country, governed by a few strangers, where pride, high ideas, and ambitious thoughts must be stifled. It is very proper that in England, a good share of the produce of earth should be appropriated to support certain families in affluence, to produce senators, sages and heroes, for the service and defence of the state, or, in other words, that great part of the rent should go to an opulent nobility and gentry who are to serve their country in parliament, in the army and navy, in the departments of science and liberal professions. The leisure, independence, and high ideas which the enjoyment of this rent affords, has enabled them to raise Britain to the pinnacle of glory. Long may they enjoy it;—but in India the haughty spirit, independence, and deep thought, which the possession of great wealth sometimes gives, ought to be suppressed. They are directly adverse to our power and interest. The nature of things, past experience of all governments, renders it unnecessary to enlarge on this subject. We do not want generals, statesmen and legislators; we want industrious husbandmen . . . . Considered politically, therefore, the general distribution of land among a number of small proprietors, who cannot easily combine against Government, is an object of importance."[1]

As Mr. Thackeray wrote, it was no part of the British intentions to create and promote a class which provides "senators, sages and heroes for the defence of the State". But laws do not always work in accordance with the wishes of their makers. The British rule by

[1] Report of Mr. Thackeray on Malabar, Canara and Ceded Districts, dated August 4, 1807, vide Firminger, *Fifth Report*, Vol. III, pp. 575-576

adopting the new land and civil laws produced a social class which ultimately destroyed the very power which had created it.

The land laws introduced by the British were thus responsible for the disruption of the old agrarian structure and the creation of a new social order. The new rent-receiving landlords, money-lenders and businessmen came to form the nucleus of the new middle class that emerged in the country in the nineteenth century. They, together with the traditional castes whose occupation was study and teaching or government service, were the first to avail themselves of the benefits of English education. It was to the educated of this heterogeneous group that the lawyer, the teacher, the civil servant, the merchant and the industrialist of the nineteenth century belonged. They constituted the country's intelligentsia which formed the link between the East and the West, and provided political leadership to the Indians. Their aspirations and desires became the aspirations and desires of India.

On the other hand, the dispossessed cultivators, the village artisans and the village menials, who had lost their customary ties with the agricultural population on the decay of the village communities and on the introduction of competition instead of custom in the determination of the relations between the classes, came to constitute the landless wage-earning class—the country's proletariat. According to Karl Marx, "the forms or conditions of production are the fundamental determinant of social structure which in turn breed attitudes, actions, and civilisations."[1] In India, however, it was the change in the property relations which caused the "social revolution".[2]

The Indian middle class historically had, therefore, a different origin from that of its counterpart in the West. There the middle class was mainly composed of merchants and industrialists together with the intellectuals and the people belonging to the learned professions: these classes did not depend upon agriculture for their livelihood, but some of them might purchase estates for the sake of prestige and profit. The middle class in India, on the other hand, had its roots in the agrarian system of the country and it largely lived on the fruits of agricultural industry. So far as the exploitation of the peasantry was concerned, the new class gave support to

[1] See Schumpeter, *Capitalism, Socialism and Democracy* (second edition, 1947), p 12
[2] Karl Marx, 'British Rule in India', article in the *New York Daily Tribune*, June 10, 1853: Marx Engels, *Selected Works*, Vol. I (Moscow edition), p. 317

the ruling power and was content to serve as its subordinate agency.

The earlier years of British rule—the period up to the middle of the nineteenth century—were marked by a spirit of cooperation between the British rulers and the neo-rich—landlords, traders and money-lenders. But this cooperation could not last long. The natural instinct of this class was to seek openings in commerce, industry, and the civil service; but here it found itself faced with stiff opposition from the middle classes of Britain that constituted the main power behind British rule in India. The national movement in India was an expression of the conflict between the middle classes of the two countries, one aspiring for wealth and influence, the other already in possession of them.

The new class was imbued with the profit motive like its counterpart in Europe, but in the pursuit of that aim it was balked by the British monopoly in trade and business, and by the lack of means and conditions of industrial development. It was largely an urban class with urban interests. It developed a thirst for Western education, a hankering for government service and a keenness for the learned professions. It imitated blindly the Western ways, customs and manners of their rulers. But it was neither respected by the rulers, nor loved by the rural masses for whose welfare and improvement it did nothing. Yet this class supplied the force which cracked the cake of custom. It provided the corps of the intelligentsia who became the spearhead of the movement for India's emancipation. But this was a totally unforseen consequence of the land-laws introduced by the British.

Disintegration of village communities

The land-revenue systems established by the British in India and the assumption of all judicial and administrative functions by government officials destroyed the powers of the old intermediaries—zamindars and farmers, and of the village Panchayats. This led to the break-up of that ancient social frame-work within which the agricultural population had lived for centuries. Later administrators looked upon this result with disfavour and a strong plea for the preservation of village communities in northern India was made by Sir Charles Metcalfe in his famous minute. He wrote, "The village communities are little Republics, having nearly everything that they

want within themselves, and almost independent of any foreign relations,... they seem to last where nothing else lasts." He added: "the union of the village communities, each one forming a separate little state in itself, I conceive, contributed more than any other to the preservation of the people of India through all revolutions and changes which they have suffered, and it is in a high degree conducive to their happiness and to the enjoyment of a great portion of freedom and independence. I wish, therefore, that the village constitutions may never be disturbed, and I dread everything that has a tendency to break them up."[1] An attempt was made to translate this into action by Robert Bird in his settlement operations in northern India. But the mahalwari settlement, in this part of the country, failed to check the process of destruction of the village communities, for although the assessment was fixed on the village as a whole, individual rights in the land were recognised and guaranteed by the State. The growing pressure of population on agriculture made land valuable property and its price steadily increased. The opening of the market for agricultural produce and the growth of cash crops by the farmer also produced similar effects. These developments imposed a heavy strain on the rural organisation and the "village Republics" which, to Metcalfe, had appeared "to last where nothing else lasts", faded out of existence in the mahalwari areas of the north in the same way as they had done under the zamindari system in Bengal and the ryotwari system in the south.

With the disintegration of the old village organisation, the social bonds that had held different elements of the rural society together were snapped. The joint family system and the Panchayats received shattering blows. Cooperation was replaced by competition. Prices, rents and wages, all came to be determined by contract between the buyers and the sellers. The collective life of the village gave way to individualism.

The modes of production and the structure of the rural economy also underwent fundamental changes. Agricultural production, instead of catering to the needs of the village population, came to be adapted to the requirements of the external market. The farmer's need for money increased and to procure it he began to produce cash crops. In the past he had suffered from fluctuations in his income

[1] Minute dated November 7, 1830 (Quoted in R. C Dutt, *Economic History under Early British Rule*, pp. 386-87)

from climatic causes only; he was now exposed to all the vicissitudes of fortune caused by market fluctuations. A fall in the price of agricultural produce in any part of the world became, for him, as much a matter of grave concern as a failure of his crops caused by drought. The exigencies of the payment of revenue demand at the fixed time, as well as his other annual needs for cash, forced him to part with his produce immediately after the harvest. The agriculturist was thus drawn into the vortex of the money economy, but partly because of his small holdings, partly because of the heavy assessments and partly due to the rack-renting by the landlord and the usurious charges of the money-lender, he failed to benefit from the change. The advantage was mainly reaped by the village grain dealer and by the commission agent in the produce market.

Nor was the agriculturist alone in suffering the ill effects of the changes wrought in the rural economy of the country. The opening of the village to foreign imports gave a deadly blow to the village crafts and industries. The village artisan lost his custom and the market for his wares. From an industrial worker he was transformed into a landless labourer seeking work in agriculture, sometime as a tenant and at other times as a wage-labourer. Next to the uprooted peasantry, the weavers and other village artisans came to constitute the most important part of the rural proletariat in the first half of the nineteenth century.

Heavy assessment and the backwardness of agriculture

While the land tenures introduced by the British broke up the old rural organisation, the heavy assessments held up agricultural progress and reduced the cultivating classes to a state of abject poverty and resourcelessness.

The theory of the early British rulers was that, unlike Europe, agricultural land in India belonged to the ruler, that by the right of conquest the ownership of all land in India had come to vest in the East India Company, and that, as the overlord, the Government was entitled to the whole of the economic rent—the Ricardian surplus—which, for any piece of land, was found by deducting the cost of production from the value of crops raised.

At the time of the Permanent Settlement in Bengal, the Government demand was fixed at 89 per cent of the estimated economic rent. The remaining eleven per cent was left to the landlords as com-

pensation for the labour of collecting land-revenue. In northern India, under the provisions of Regulation VII of 1822, the revenue demand was pitched at 80 per cent of the net assets of land.[1]

In the Bombay Presidency, under the experimental settlements prior to the first regular settlement of 1824-28, the demand had been fixed so high that even the Governor was constrained to write in respect of Broach, that "the assessment . . . on the plan here adopted is utterly impossible. An increase of four lakhs and a half has taken place this last year: a circumstance that I cannot contemplate with pleasure, while the sources of the revenue and the principles of the increase are so completely in the dark."[2] In the Ahmadabad district the granting of villages to the highest bidders had the "tendency to strain the revenue to the highest pitch".[3] The districts of the Deccan and Khandesh had a similar story to tell about the burden of land-revenue. Systematic surveys and settlement operations were commenced by Pringle in 1824. The work was abandoned in 1828. In fixing the land-revenue demand, the principle of limiting the government share to fifty-five per cent of the net produce was accepted. But this was only on paper. In actual practice, the demand worked out at a much higher proportion of the net assets. This was because the measurement of land was "grossly faulty", and "the estimates of produce" on which the demand was based were highly exaggerated.[4] In the re-survey that was started in 1835 by Messrs. Goldsmid and Wingate, the very basis of assessment was changed: the State instead of demanding a share in the produce of land came to levy a tax on the estimated value of the land.

In Madras, in the earlier settlements, the government demand was fixed at 45 to 55 per cent of the gross produce of the land. Assuming the cost of production to work out at half the gross produce, the assessment in the Presidency took away the whole of the economic rent. This was found oppressive and the Madras Government recommended to the Court of Directors to limit the assessment to one-third of the gross produce. The Court, however, expressed "a doubt whether a third, or any other proportion of the produce, can be

[1] Letter from the Governor General to the Court of Directors, dated April 7, 1831, para 107, see R. C. Dutt, *Economic History under Early British Rule*, pp. 384-85

[2] Minute dated April 25, 1821, *Selection of Papers from Records at East India House*, Vol. III (1826), p 662

[3] Minute of the Governor of Bombay (Elphinstone) dated April 6, 1821, para 45, vide *Selection of Papers, op. cit.*, p. 686

[4] *Bombay Administration Report*, 1872-73, p. 41

assumed as an invariable standard of assessment."[1] The principle of limiting the land-tax to one-third of the gross produce, was however, ultimately accepted for this Presidency. But, on the assumption that the cost of production is about one-half of the gross produce, the rate of tax works out at 66⅔ per cent of the economic rent of the land. In smaller farms where the cost of production is comparatively high, it would amount to much more; sometimes almost the whole of the net assets of the farmer were claimed.

With such high rates of taxation, it was impossible for capital to accumulate in agriculture or any incentive to be left for the landowner to make improvements in land. In the permanently settled areas, the zamindar considered his function to be limited to the collection of his rent which was unrelated to the produce of land. The rent, in these areas, depended on the bargain that could be struck with the tenants, rather than on the increase in the produce of the land. The landlord rack-rented the tenants and appropriated to himself the whole of the economic surplus, thereby leaving little for meeting the vicissitudes of seasons and fortunes. In the ryotwari areas, the Government played the role of the rack-renting landlord. The land-revenue demand in Madras and Bombay Presidencies, as also in the temporarily settled mahalwari tracts of northern India, was so excessive as to devour the whole of the surplus production of land.[2] Agricultural progress was consequently held up for want of capital in the hands of the cultivating population.

It is not difficult to explain the reasons for the adoption of an oppressive land-revenue policy. They lay in the anxiety of the East India Company to meet the cost of their conquests and to support the expensive system of their administration. The gross expenditure of the East India Company was £10 million in 1799-1800 and £12·4 million in 1801-2. It showed almost continuous increase thereafter, reaching the high figure of £24·2 millions in 1825-26. With the arrival of Lord William Bentinck in India in 1828, a policy of retrenchment and economy in expenditure was carried through over the next six years and the annual expenditure was brought down to

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[1] Revenue letter from the Court of Directors to Madras, dated December 12, 1821, para 34, *Selection of Papers from the Records at East India House*, Vol. III (1826), p. 523

[2] "With the introduction of the ryotwari system middlemen, the chief stay of indigent cultivators, have disappeared with their capital; But the government owns and appropriates the only surplus production of the land, while the Ryotwari cultivators are destined to the misery which cannot be avoided in the absence of capital."—*Calcutta Review*, Vol LXXV (1863), p. 119

£ 16 million in 1835-36. But it again showed an upward trend and by the time of the Revolt of 1857 it had reached the high figure of £ 32 million.

India was called upon to bear this heavy cost of administration with her declining resources. With her trade and industry ruined by the foreign conqueror,[1] the burden of taxation had to be borne by the none-too-prosperous agriculturist. In 1792-93 the land-revenue demand for the Bengal Presidency amounted to £ 3·1 million; in 1835-36 it had risen to £ 3·3 million. Since the province was permanently settled, the increase was due mainly to the extension of cultivation. In Madras, Bombay and the North-West Provinces, however, it was mostly the higher assessments that caused the increase. In 1810-11, for instance, the revenue receipts in Madras amounted to just a little over £ 1 million; in 1825-26 the figure had risen to a little under £ 4 million—a fourfold increase in a period of fifteen years. The Bombay Presidency tells the same tale. The land-revenue receipts in the Presidency rose from £ 800,000 in 1817 to £ 1,150,000 in 1818 and to £ 1·86 million in 1837-38.[2] The land-revenue was the backbone of Indian finance in the days of the East India Company and its rate was determined more with an eye on the requirements of the government than by considerations of what the peasantry could pay. It is little wonder that under such an inequitous system of taxation the peasantry was ruined and agriculture declined to a state of extreme backwardness.

"Agrarian troubles generally spring from a conflict between a vitiated land system and the passion for land from which the most thriftless classes of an agricultural society are not free."[3] The Indian cultivator, even under such adverse circumstances, stuck to the soil and toiled and sweated for his subsistence in his unremunerative occupation, not so much because of his "passion for land" as for the perfectly understandable reason that he had no alternative opening for employment. A growing population was condemned to subsist on a declining agriculture. The misery of the masses, the increase in the incidence of famine and disease, and the chronic unemployment in the country were the inevitable results of the system.

The British fiscal policy and land system destroyed the ancient

[1] For a detailed account of the decline of trade and industry, see Chapter X, *infra*
[2] Dutt, R. C., *Economic History of India, etc*, p. 357
[3] *Calcutta Review*, Vol. XXXVIII (1863), The Land System of India, p. 111

institutions and the rural organisation under which the Indian cultivator had lived for centuries. The shell which had protected the social organisation from all external influences was thus broken and the way was opened for the establishment of a society organised on the bases of private property, individual enterprise, accumulation of capital, and technological progress.

CHAPTER TEN

SOCIAL AND ECONOMIC CONSEQUENCES OF BRITISH RULE: DECLINE OF TRADE AND INDUSTRY

I INDUSTRIAL AND COMMERCIAL SUPREMACY OF INDIA IN THE SEVENTEENTH CENTURY

The supremacy of India in the industrial field reached its high-watermark towards the end of the seventeenth century when there was a sudden spurt in the demand for Indian cotton goods in England, induced by a remarkable change in English fashions and modes of dress. The English people developed a preference for light cotton garments in place of the coarse woollens that they had worn for centuries. Among the ladies there was a craze for Indian chintzes and calicoes. "On a sudden", reports a publication of the early eighteenth century, "we saw all our women, rich and poor, clothed in calico, printed and painted, the gayer and the more tawdry the better". Coarse varieties of Indian cloth had been imported into England in the past, but they were little used for purposes of dress-making. The change in the fashion of dress led to the chintzes being "advanced from lying upon their floors to their backs, from the foot-cloth to the petty-coats".[1]

Defoe bewailed the fact that "it (Indian cotton cloth) crept into our houses, our closets and bed chambers; curtains, cushions, chairs, and at last beds themselves were nothing but calicoes or Indian stuffs". The effect was that "almost everything that used to be made of wool or silk, relating either to dress of the women or the furniture of our houses, was supplied by the Indian Trade".[2]

The East India Company seized the opportunity offered by this new demand and began to import large quantities of cotton cloth from India. Originally, as is well known, the Company had been established in 1600 for competing with the Dutch in the pepper trade, and for a long time pepper and other spices constituted the principal items of import into England. About 1670, there was a sudden increase in the demand for textiles and this was immediately reflected in the orders placed by the Directors for purchases in

[1] *A Brief Deduction of the Oriental Progress and Immense Increase in Woollen Manufactures* (London 1727), p 50, quoted by Thomas, P J, *Mercantilism and East India Trade*, p 26

[2] *Weekly Review*, January 31, 1708, quoted by Thomas, P.J., *op cit.*, p. 30

India. In view of their popularity, import duties on them were abolished in England in 1684 and this gave further impetus to the demand. Finally, with the prohibition of imports from France in 1688, the Indian calicoes emerged as the biggest item of the Company's imports from India. Hitherto the Company's lists were primarily made up of saltpetre, indigo, pepper and other commodities, but after 1688 textile goods of various kinds almost monopolised the space on the list; indigo and spices were relegated to a corner.[1]

The change in the composition of India's trade led to the revival of opposition in Britain to the East India Company. The attack came from two quarters—from the mercantilists and from the woollen and silk manufacturers. The former attacked the Indian trade on the ground that it led to the export of treasure from England. What the country obtained in exchange for gold and silver was Indian muslins, "a shadow of a commodity". "If European countries agreed not to deal in Indian goods", writes Davenant, "this side of the world would save a great and continual expense of treasure." Another writer cries, in perfect Biblical style, "O Jerusalem, Jerusalem, thy destruction is of thyself...O England, strangers devour thee, strangers eat thee up. Thou art fond of novelties which will be thy ruin".[2]

The other line of attack on the Company's trade with India was that the import of cotton goods destroyed the ancient woollen and the nascent silk industries and thus caused unemployment and suffering among the weavers. While there can be no doubt that the displacement of British textile manufactures by Indian cotton piece-goods, both in England and in the European markets, must have caused unemployment in the textile industries, the pamphleteers of the time painted a grim and probably exaggerated picture of the sufferings of the artisans. They succeeded in making the imposition of restrictions on imports from India a national issue. It was stated that, by the end of the seventeenth century, half the working men of the weaving trade "were running up and down the nation seeking bread from Canterbury to London, from London to Norwich".[3]

[1] Thomas, P J, *op.cit*, p 38
[2] *Ibid*, p 47
[3] *Ibid*, p 55

The suffering was not confined to weavers alone. The public finances were affected because of the decline in revenue and the increase in expenditure on poor relief.[1] The profits of the landlords were diminished by the decline in the rents of land and houses. Under the circumstances, it was natural for the agitation to assume nation-wide dimensions. One of the first effects of the agitation was that the Company withdrew from India the weavers, pattern makers and artists who had been sent from England to advise Indian weavers about European tastes and fashions and to persuade them to produce the patterns of cloth in great demand in Europe. But popular opinion was not satisfied by this minor concession. The national temper was so aroused that legislation to prohibit or restrict the East India Company's import trade in Indian cotton goods could not be long evaded.[2]

British protectionism before the conquest of Bengal

Accordingly an Act was passed in 1700 which laid down that from Michaelmas (September 29, 1701) "all manufactured silks, Bengalls, and stuffs mixed with silk or herba, of the manufacture of Persea, China, or East Indies and all Calicoes painted, dyed, printed or stained there which are or shall be imported into this kingdom of England, dominion of Wales and town of Berwick-on-Tweed, shall not be worn or otherwise used within this kingdom".[3] The Act excluded from its operation calicoes painted or printed in England thereby saving "the various subsidiary industries that subsisted on working up Indian calicoes". The Act also provided for the establishment of bonded warehouses which separated imports for the purchase of the carrying trade, from imports for home consumption. In this way not only profits from the carrying trade were retained, but positive encouragement was given to the British navigation and shipping industry.[4]

But the Act of 1700 failed to stop completely the imports of Indian calicoes into England In 1702, therefore, an import

[1] Poor relief at the time fell among the duties of parishes. In some of the parishes, like Gloucester, for instance, one-fifth of the whole annual value of land was distributed to the starving poor. See *Ibid*, p. 56

[2] For an interesting and detailed account of the struggle between free traders and protectionists and the role of the East India Company in delaying legislation against Indian goods, see *Ibid.*, pp. 67-117

[3] *Ibid*, p. 115

[4] *Ibid.*

duty of fifteen per cent was imposed on plain cottons. This shifted the demand from coarse and cheap calicoes to superior muslins.

The imports of Indian white calicoes rose to the phenomenal figure of 2,088,451 pieces in 1719 as against 247,214 pieces in 1698, 951,109 pieces in 1701 and 1,220,324 pieces in 1718. The imported cloth was worked up, that is "stained, dyed and printed" in England for sale. Consequently, a flourishing dyeing and printing industry developed. If protection had benefited anybody, it was this new British industry. The weavers failed to benefit except where they gave up the traditional woollen trade and took to weaving cotton, an industry which was just establishing itself in England at the time.

The agitation against Indian goods was revived in 1719 and a new Act was passed in 1720 which prohibited the wear and use of Indian silks and calicoes painted, stained, or dyed in England under the penalty of £5 for each offence on the wearer, and of £20 on the seller.

The new Act did not prove more successful than its predecessor. The imports of white calicoes fell to 718,678 pieces in 1722, but rose to 1,115,011 pieces in 1723, and 1,291,614 pieces in 1724.[1] Similarly, the imports of Bengal silks which stood at 55,491 pieces in 1721 fell to 18,439 pieces in 1722, but rose to 58,729 pieces in 1723 and 79,602 pieces in 1727. The pamphleteers once again started denouncing the use of Indian fabrics. Lamenting the failure of legislation in putting a stop to the imports of Indian goods, the ingenious author of *A Plan of the English Commerce* wrote in 1728, "two things amongst us are ungovernable: our passions and our fashions".[2]

England was not alone in adopting the protectionist policy against Indian manufactures. The mercantilist spirit was rampant at the time, and all European countries, with the sole exception of Holland, either prohibited totally or imposed heavy duties on the import of Indian cotton goods. Louis XV's edict of 1726 is typical of the spirit of the time. By this law, the penalties for the use and sale of Indian cotton goods in France were made stringent. Smuggling was to be met, under the law, by the imposition of capital punishment on the third offence!

[1] See Balkrishna, *op cit.*, Appendix C (Table) to Chapter VII, pp 308-9

[2] Quoted by Thompson, *Six Lectures on the Resources of India* (London, 1842), p 48; also Balkrishna, *op. cit.*, pp 263-64

Meanwhile, the cotton industry in England was developing rapidly. By the middle of the eighteenth century it was well established. In 1744 the Directors of the East India Company wrote to India, "printing here hath come to so great perfection that unless you can keep to these instructions, you must lessen the quantity".[1] About the excellence of British printers it was said at the time, "it was reserved for the English to attempt the imitation of the best Indian work in prints and to arrive at a degree of perfection which no one would have thought possible".[2] In 1754, a printed piece which a dealer presented to the Princess of Wales is said to have greatly excelled Indian chintz in workmanship.[3]

Under the combined influence of the restrictions on imports into Europe and the growth of the English industry, the Indian cotton trade with Europe began to suffer a decline from the middle of the eighteenth century. Nevertheless, it speaks highly of the resilience of the Indian industry and of the high quality of its products that substantial quantities of both cotton piece-goods and silk continued to be imported into Europe even after 1750. In 1760, which may be taken as a normal year, after the battle of Plassey, the exports to England alone amounted to 988,709 pieces of white calicoes, 51,108 pieces of wrought silk from Bengal, 212,910 pieces of stained calicoes and 665 pieces of sooseys. In the same year, other goods exported to England from India were: pepper 3,133,884 lbs., coffee 186 lbs. (the previous year's figure for coffee was 971,464 lbs.), wool 75,543 lbs., and saltpetre 37,780 cwts.[4]

But it was not till foreign rule was firmly established in India and political power was abused by the new rulers to strangulate the arts and crafts of the subject people that Indian industries suffered final extinction. They held their own till about the first decade of the nineteenth century. It was after 1820 that they suffered a heavy blow in the form of the fall in the foreign demand for their products. The following table[5] shows the fall in the export of cotton piece-goods from India during the period of thirty-five years between 1795-96 and 1829-30:

[1] Vide Thomas, P. J., *op. cit.*, p. 163
[2] Baines, *History of Cotton Manufactures*, p 261
[3] Thomas, P. J., *op. cit.*, pp. 163-64
[4] Vide Balkrishna, *op. cit.*, pp. 308-310
[5] *Select Committee Report*, 1833, Vol. II, Part II, pp. 883-87

EXPORT OF COTTON PIECE-GOODS FROM THE PORT OF CALCUTTA

(Pieces)

Year	United Kingdom	America	Hamburgh	Copenhagen	Portugal	Total for all countries
1795-96	198,750	434,412½	344,286	186,549	527,068	2,122,089½
1796-97 ..	162,195	522,692	104,574	307,073	185,077	1,712,247
1797-98 .	161,276	457,945	28,532	64,374	401,391	1,466,142
1798-99 .	177,197	239,928	86,277	8,415	183,125	1,454,463
1799-1800 ..	305,119	776,919	8,744	169,473	1 122,853	3,026,253
1823-24	106,516	38,440	.	.	..	2,189,926
1824-25 ..	167,524	123,748	.	9,178	112,165	1,543,095
1825-26 .	111,295	146,184		1,646	123,514	1,256,573
1826-27	47,572	21,648			83,867	970,223
1827-28	50,654	10,521			54,002	978,858
1828-29 .	32,626	23,780			20,045	819,170
1829-30 .	13,043	3,771	.		.	695,725

II INDIA'S INDUSTRIAL DECLINE

During the early decades of the nineteenth century neither the existing import duties nor the fall in the cost of production of cotton piece-goods resulting from the use of steam power and machinery enabled England to compete with goods from India in the markets of Europe. Indian prices continued to be from fifty to sixty per cent lower than English prices. In order, therefore, to create favourable conditions for its own goods, Britain used her political power to smother the manufactures of her defeated rival. The duties on Indian imports were made prohibitory and Indian producers were saddled with crippling burdens. The rates of duties on some of the Indian imports into England were as follows in 1812:[1]

Calicoes, plain, white Dimities, ,, ,,	£68 6s.8d. per cent ad valorem, plus an additional warehousing duty of £3 6s.8d.
Articles of manufactures of cotton, wholly or in part made up, not otherwise charged with duty	£27 6s.0d. per cent ad valorem plus £10 0s.0d.

[1] *Ibid*, Vol II, Appendix 5, pp. 592-607

Mats and matting	£68 6s.8d. per cent ad valorem, plus £2 13s.4d.
Silk manufactures	Prohibited for home use
Taffaties and other plain or figured silks not otherwise described	”
Warehousing duty on above when imported for purposes of re-export	£3 6s.8d. per cent ad valorem
Hard soap	£68 6s.8d. plus £2 13s.4d. per cent ad valorem
Sugar	£1 13s.0d. per cwt
Indigo	£0 14s.4d. per 100 lbs. of weight plus £2 13s.4d. per cent ad valorem

"It consequently became necessary", writes Wilson, "to protect the latter (the British manufactures) by duties of seventy and eighty per cent on their value or by positive prohibition."[1] "Had this not been the case, he continues, "the mills of Paisley and of Manchester would have been stopped in their outset and could scarcely have been again set in motion, even by the powers of steam. They were created by the sacrifice of the Indian manufacture. Had India been independent, she would have retaliated, would have imposed preventive duties on British goods, and would thus have preserved her own productive industry from annihilation. This act of self-defence was not permitted her; she was at the mercy of the stranger. British goods were forced upon her without paying any duty; and the foreign manufacturer employed the arm of political injustice to keep down and ultimately strangle a competitor with whom he could not have contended on equal terms."[2]

[1] Mill, James, *History of British India* (continued by Wilson), Vol. VII (London 1858), p. 385, note 1
[2] *Ibid.*

The enormous increase in the exports of British manufactures to India after 1813, when the trading monopoly of the East India Company was withdrawn and the Indian trade was thrown open to all, was therefore not merely due to the fall in the prices of British manufactures, as was made out by some of the witnesses before the Select Committee[1], but largely because of the commercial policy of Britain and her political domination over India.

Use of political power to destroy industry

As a sovereign power, the interest of the East India Company lay in promoting the wealth of the subjects by encouraging their productive activity; but as a body of merchants it was interested in increasing its profits. "It is the interest of East India Company considered as sovereigns", wrote Adam Smith, "that European goods which are carried to their Indian dominions, should be sold there as cheap as possible; and the Indian goods which are brought from thence should bring here as good a price, or should be sold here as dear as possible. But the reverse of this is their interest as merchants. As sovereigns, their interest is exactly the same with that of the country which they govern. As merchants their interest is exactly opposite to that interest."[2] The Company manipulated prices to the detriment of the artisans; it oppressed the weavers and followed other restrictive policies which ruined Indian industries, particularly the cotton industry of Bengal. As William Bolts, a contemporary critic of the East India Company, observed in 1767, "the whole inland trade of the country, as at present conducted, and that of the country's investment for Europe in a more peculiar degree, has been one continued scene of oppression: the baneful effects of which are severely felt by every weaver and manufacturer in the country, every article produced being made a monopoly; in which the English with the *banyans* and black *gomashtas*, arbitrarily decide what quantities of goods each manufacturer shall deliver and the *prices* he shall receive for them."[3]

The mechanism of making purchases of Indian goods and providing the Company's investments in India was so contrived as to result in oppression and in the "defrauding of the poor weaver". Agents

[1] *Select Committee Report*, 1833, Vol II, Mr Mackillop's evidence, p. 516
[2] Adam Smith, *The Wealth of Nations* (Modern Library edition), pp. 602-3
[3] Bolts, William, *Consideration of Indian Affairs*, p. 191

called *gomashtas* were engaged by the Company mostly on monthly wages. Each *gomashta* accompanied by a clerk and a cashier paid visits to the interior at regular intervals for the purpose of making purchases. When Mir Jafar was installed on the gaddi in 1757, the *gomashtas* of the English had already become so powerful and had acquired such jurisdiction that "even the authority of the Rajas and Zamindars in the country durst not withstand". After 1765, when the veil of the Nawab's sovereignty in Bengal was finally cast aside, they came to derive their authority directly from the sovereign of the country and exercised powers on his behalf. They were not only commercial agents, but also law-givers and magistrates from whose decisions there was no appeal. "The assent of the poor weavers", adds William Bolts, "is in general not deemed necessary; for the *gomashtas* when employed on the Company's investment frequently make them sign what they please; and upon the weavers refusing to take the money offered, it has been known they have had it tied to their girdles and they have been sent away with a flogging."[1]

A number of weavers were also registered in the books of the Company, and they were not permitted to work for any one else. They were transferred from one *gomashta* of the Company to another, "as so many slaves, subject to the tyranny and roguery of every succeeding *gomashta*."[2] Peons and watchmen were employed to supervise them, so that they did not sell goods to any one other than the Company's *gomashta*, and on the slightest suspicion of the weaver's intention of doing so, pieces of cloth were cut out of the loom even before they had reached the finished stage.[3] If, in spite of this watchfulness, any weaver dared to sell his goods to any one else with the connivance or support of *dallals*, both the broker and the weaver were "seized and imprisoned, confined in irons, fined considerable sums of money, flogged and deprived, in the most ignominious manner of what they esteem most valuable, their caste."[4] With the Company's investments, the *gomashtas* combined personal and private business and made use of their arbitrary powers for buying goods on their account on the same favourable terms on which they purchased goods for the Company. "The roguery practised in this

[1] *Ibid.*, p. 193
[2] *Ibid.*
[3] *Ibid.*
[4] *Ibid*, p. 194

department", concludes William Bolts, "is beyond imagination but all terminates in the defrauding of the poor weaver; for the price which the Company's *gomashtas*, and in confederacy with them, the *Fachendars* fix upon the goods, are in all places, at least fifteen per cent and in some forty per cent less than the goods manufactured would sell for in the public bazar or market upon a free sale."[1]

Another sharp practice was the manipulation of prices of raw materials to the detriment of Indian producers. One such instance may be quoted: Bengal obtained its supplies of finer varieties of cotton from Bombay and Surat. The servants of the Company formed a private company consisting of the members of the Council at Calcutta in order to corner the supplies and to raise the prices in Bengal. They purchased cotton worth Rs. 25 lakhs from Surat, causing the shooting up of prices immediately from the prevailing range of Rs. 16 to 18 per maund to that of Rs. 28 to 30 per maund. This was ruinous to the weaver. He could not charge higher prices for his products because they were arbitrarily fixed down for him by the Company's purchase agents, while he was forced to pay exorbitant prices for his raw materials.

The effect of the practices followed by the Company and its servants was bound to prove destructive. The craftsmen were ruined. The few adventurers in the service of the Company, no doubt, amassed great fortunes and retired to England to lead lives of ease and plenty. But they did so by killing the proverbial goose that laid the golden eggs. The prices of Indian manufactures were inflated without any corresponding increase in the wages of labour. The quality of Indian products was debased. The history of the early period of British rule in India is, thus, a sordid tale of vandalism, plunder, oppression and destruction of Indian handicrafts and manufactures. The once flourishing industrial towns were depopulated and the artisans diverted from their traditional occupations into agriculture in order to find employment as wage labourers.

In 1769, Mr. Becher, the Company's Resident at Murshidabad, reported: "this fine country, which flourished under the most despotic and arbitrary Government, is verging towards its ruin while the English have really so great a share in the Administration...With concern I now see its present ruinous condition, which I am convin-

[1] *Ibid*, p. 193

ced, is greatly owing to the monopoly that has been made of late years in the Company's name of almost all the manufactures in the country."[1] A responsible member of the British Parliament, William Fullarton, was even more forthright in his denunciation of the Company's rule in Bengal. In 1787 he described the transformation of Bengal after twenty years of the Company's rule in these words: "In former times the Bengal countries were the granary of nations, and the repository of commerce, wealth and manufacture in the East...But such has been the restless energy of our misgovernment that within the short space of twenty years, many parts of these countries have been reduced to the appearance of a desert. The fields are no longer cultivated; extensive tracts are already overgrown with thickets; the husbandman is plundered; the manufacturer oppressed; famine has been repeatedly endured; and depopulation has ensued."[2] By 1789, the prosperous industrial province of Bengal had been so ruined that "one-third of the Company's territory in Hindustan" had been converted, according to Lord Cornwallis, into "a jungle inhabited only by wild beasts."[3]

Internal causes of economic decline

Howsoever strong the industrial structure of the country might have been, it could hardly withstand the hostility of its foreign rulers. But in fact there were weaknesses in the industrial structure itself which must share part of the blame for the decline of industries. In the first place, Indians did not evince any interest in the extension of markets for their goods, a factor which, as Adam Smith points out, limited the division of labour and, therefore, industrial progress. What is worse, most of India's foreign trade, even before the British conquest, had passed into the hands of foreigners. The result was that Indian artisans and producers were at the mercy of foreign merchants so far as sales in foreign markets were concerned.

Secondly, against the aggressive Mercantilism of the West, India had no national commercial policy of its own. Even in the heyday of their power, the Mughal emperors remained merely silent spectators to the establishment of "factories" and to the scramble for the

[1] See Dutt, R. P., *India Today* (Bombay, 1947), p. 92
[2] *Ibid.*, p. 93
[3] Lord Cornwallis' Minute dated 18th September, 1789, vide Firminger, *Fifth Report*, Vol. II, p. 512

capture of Indian trade and markets by European powers. When heavy import duties were being imposed on Indian goods in England in the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries, India, though it was a sovereign power, did not retaliate against England. The fact is that in India economic questions had not yet begun to be viewed from a national standpoint, and it is doubtful whether the country would have considered the question of external trade differently from what it did even if political circumstances had not changed for the worse.

Thirdly, the Indian weakness at sea was as much responsible for the industrial decline of the country as for its political subjugation. In the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries, European powers combined maritime trade with piracy. It was hazardous for any merchant to sail with cargo to another country without adequate armed protection against the pirates. On account of the lack of sea power, India failed to maintain the overseas markets, which were forcibly acquired by the European nations. The result was that while Europe speedily went through the industrial revolution, India suffered industrial decline and was converted into a backward agricultural country.

Fourthly, the gild organisation which characterised medieval industry and commerce in Europe, was very weak in India. The caste system which did duty for the gild, failed to protect industry from external attacks. When the foreign trader appeared on the scene for making purchases of industrial goods, the individual artisan was pitted against the organised monopolies of foreign buyers. He depended very often on advances of money from the purchaser for executing the latter's orders for the products. In the absence of an independent gild and financial organisation, the Indian producer was unable to hold his own in settling prices and in producing commodities independently of advance orders from the foreigner.

Finally, India did not possess a class of industrial entrepreneurs such as England had. If there were no inventions or technological advances in India, it was not because of the inferiority of Indian talent or skill, but because that progressive class which, in the West, first captured the markets and then organised production to supply those markets with manufactures of their own country, did not exist.

Decline of agriculture

The ruin of Indian industry proceeded simultaneously with the decline in agriculture and commerce. The factors responsible for this were mainly political.

Agriculture suffered because the State levied an oppressive land-tax and because the servants of the Company forced the villages to raise crops which benefited them rather than the cultivator. It was said about the Dutch that in the Spice Islands they "burn all the spiceries which a fertile season produces beyond what they expect to dispose of in Europe with such a profit as they think sufficient".[1] The English Company followed the same destructive policy in Bengal. "It has not been uncommon", wrote Adam Smith, "for the chief, that is the first clerk of a factory, to order a peasant to plough up a rich field of poppies, and sow it with rice or some other grain. The pretence was, to prevent a scarcity of provisions; but the real reason, to give the chief an opportunity of selling at a better price a large quantity of opium which he then happened to have upon hand. Upon other occasions the order has been reversed; and a rich field of rice and other grain has been ploughed up, in order to make room for a plantation of poppies, when the chief foresaw that extra-ordinary profit was likely to be made by opium."[2]

Disruption of trade

India's trade suffered equally with agriculture and industry. Its destruction was wrought by the institution of monopolies—sometimes legal, but very often illegal—by the servants of the Company, and its diversion from its natural channels.

(a) *Internal Trade*: The East India Company had obtained exemption from the payment of transit and customs duties since the times of Farrukh Siyar. But they abused this concession. They defrauded the treasury of its legitimate dues on the private goods belonging to the Company's servants who frequently issued *parwanas* over their signatures to allow them to pass from one part of the country to the other without paying the transit duties. The *dastaks* (signed passes) of the servants of the Company became a vendible commodity and even the Indian traders frequently purchased them from the Company's servants in order to secure exemption from duties.

[1] Adam Smith, *op. cit.*, p. 600
[2] *Ibid*, p. 601

On the assumption of political power in Bengal, the Company came to control the country's commercial activity. Indian and foreign merchants were then systematically ousted from their business by discriminatory taxation and the institution of trade monopoly in the more important commodities. Under Clive almost the whole of the inland trade was monopolised by the Company and its servants. "The whole inland trade, in almost everything else that the country produces, and even the trade in some of the principal articles of foreign import", writes William Bolts, "has been carried on as monopolies, by a few of the superior servants of the Company with their Banyans and favourites: and not only has every public measure of late years adopted by the Government at Calcutta been calculated to favour the establishment of such monopolies, but even the contradictory and the injudicious orders of the Court of Directors, on some occasions from want of local knowledge, and on others from a connivance at the proceedings of their servants abroad, or from the state of parties in the Leaden Hall, have promoted such shameful measures."[1] The system of transit duties was used as a prop to maintain these monopolies and save the monopolists from losses on their transactions. For instance, the crop of cotton in Upper India (Uttar Pradesh) turned out to be extraordinarily good in the year the superior servants of the Company in Bengal formed a monopoly in the import of Bombay cotton. The native merchants in Bengal began to import cotton in large quantities from northern and southern India. The Company's monopoly was threatened in consequence, with the prospect of heavy loss. Immediately, a thirty per cent duty on the inland import of cotton passing through Bihar into Bengal was levied and prices were forced up to save the monopolist from loss.[2]

The internal trade was in the hands of the servants of the Company and the profits from it went to enrich its corrupt employees rather than the Company itself. Great fortunes were made by the higher servants of the Company. Even the Governor General took part in this traffic. Such activities not only pushed out the Indians from the internal trade, but also defrauded the producer and the consumer by forcing the former to sell cheap and the latter to buy dear.[3] The Bengal famine of 1770 was the direct outcome of these monopolistic

[1] Bolts, William, *op, cit.*, p. 195
[2] *Ibid.*, p. 196
[3] Macaulay, T. B., *Critical and Historical Essays*, Dent's double volume edition (1933), p. 528

practices in trade. "The English manufactured a famine by buying up all the rice, and refusing to sell it again, except at fabulous prices."[1]

In other ways, too, the Company used its political power for driving out its rival merchants from trade. There were frequent instances "of the goods of private merchants, even Europeans, but particularly of those belonging to Armenians, Mughals, and Gentoos (Hindus), being in consequence of this monopoly, stopped on the public road, and by force carried to the freight warehouse".[2] The proprietors of these goods were often "obliged, contrary to their will, to see their goods shipped on vessels they had not a good opinion of and going on voyages whose destination and management were often contrary to their private schemes of trade".[3] The goods were often damaged by being left at out of the way and unfrequented ports and were sometimes lost. The Armenians who were the principal traders in Bengal for exports to Persia and Arabia were completely ruined, their place being taken by the Company and its servants.[4]

Transit and customs duties had been levied on the inland trade even under Mughal rule. The British, on their acquisition of power in Bengal, substantially increased the rates, imposed customs duties on commodities that had hitherto been exempt and raised new tariff and toll barriers. An elaborate machinery of transit and customs duties was thus built up in the country. These imposts were instrumental in achieving two important objectives. First they ousted the rivals of the East India Company—the Dutch and the French, as also the Indian merchants—from the country's inland trade; and secondly, they made a useful addition to the revenues of the Company, which were used partly for meeting the military and civil expenses of the Company and partly in making purchases of Indian goods for export to England. As always happens with high protective duties, the two objectives proved somewhat contradictory, for the duties which are high enough to have protective effect cannot bring much revenue.

Ultimately transit duties on the inland trade began to be lowered towards the end of the eighteenth century and were finally abolished after the Parliamentary enquiry into East India affairs in 1813.

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[1] Marx, *Capital* (Moscow edition), Vol. I, p. 753
[2] Bolts, William, *op. cit.*, p 197
[3] *Ibid.*
[4] *Ibid.*

(b) *Foreign Trade:* The English at home had a clear understanding of how the resources of India were to be used for promoting the prosperity of Britain. As early as 1769, the Directors of the East India Company had issued instructions desiring that the manufacture of raw silk should be encouraged in Bengal and that of manufactured silk fabrics should be discouraged.[1] In the same letter, it was recommended that the silk-winders should be forced to work in the Company's factories and prohibited from working in their own homes. This letter contained the essence of the policy of moulding the Indian economy into the colonial pattern, the main function of which was to buy cheaply raw materials for the home industries and to sell dearly its manufactured goods. "This letter", the Select Committee of 1783 rightly observed, "contains a perfect plan of policy both of compulsion and encouragement which must in a very considerable degree operate destructively to the manufactures of Bengal. Its effects must be to change the whole face of that industrial country in order to render it a field of produce of crude materials subservient to the manufacture of Great Britain."[2] The plan was in accord with the well-established commercial policy of Britain in the eighteenth century. As early as 1721, it was pointed out in the King's speech that "if by encouragement the colonies could be induced to produce the naval stores which were imported from foreign countries, it would not only increase the riches and powers of the nation but by employing the colonies in this useful service *would divert them from carrying on manufactures* which interfered with those of England".[3] The policy was put through in North America in the first instance, but after the loss of those colonies, Britain turned to India so that it might play the role that American colonies had played in her economy before 1776. The aim of turning Indian economy into the classical colonial mould was vigorously pursued in the early period of British rule.

The Company had obtained the monopoly of English trade with India and China. So long as the Company was without political power in India, the monopoly only operated against the English merchants not connected with the Company. With the conquest of

[1] General Letter to Bengal, dated March 17, 1769, vide Dutt, R. C., *Economic History of India under Early British Rule*, p. 256

[2] *Ninth Report of the Select Committee, 1783*, p 64

[3] Rees, R F, 'The Commercial Policy of England in the Eighteenth Century', *Economica*, London, 1925

India, the East India Company acquired the power to exclude rival European companies from the Indian trade. The Dutch and the French were prevented from making purchases of Indian goods from the Company's territories; the producers and artisans were prohibited from selling their products to the agents of the non-British companies, and the *gomashtas* of the Dutch and the French companies were often beaten up and molested by the agents of the English Company. It was only in the China trade in opium and tea that the other European companies were encouraged to participate, but this was dictated by the necessity of securing the maximum quantities of Chinese silver to purchase "investments" in India.[1]

With the appointment of Cornwallis, a sharp change began. Furber describes it as "a shift from unregulated to regulated imperialism". "In the last years of Hastings we watch Europeans scramble to get their wealth home in any way they can. In the last years of Cornwallis there is a similar scramble for wealth but it is more orderly."[2] Pitt's India Act and the administrative reforms of Cornwallis helped considerably to further the cause of imperialism.

Changes were taking place which were destined to make the East India Company wholly subservient to the State.[3] Under the circumstances, the emphasis in the British commercial policy in India naturally shifted from securing a favourable balance of trade together with annual remittances of the surplus from India, to an increase in the volume of trade by the exploitation of the Indian market for the benefit of the British industry. The Parliamentary probes made into the affairs of the East India Company, at intervals of twenty years beginning from 1773, provided opportunities to the industrialists to influence Parliament in formulating England's commercial policy. From 1813, systematic attempts were made to extend the market for British goods in India.

The value of trade between England and India over the period of twenty years from 1793 to 1813 stood at the average annual figure of

[1] Sir John Macpherson, head of the British Government in India at the time, privately offered to the Dutch in 1785 every facility for shipping opium to Batavia "He clearly saw that the English Company would benefit by selling opium to the Dutch Company to be paid for in China and not in Bengal Herklot's (Dutch Representative) inability to bind the Dutch Governor General at Batavia to pay the English Company large sums in silver prevented this private offer from being accepted Macpherson did his best to give the Dutch as large allowances as possible of opium and saltpetre." —Furber, Holden, *John Company At Work* (Cambridge, Harvard University, 1948), p. 87

[2] Furber, Holden, *op. cit*, p. 227

[3] *Ibid*, p 302

£2 million. Considering the vastness of the country and judged by the accounts of its riches that had reached England in the eighteenth century, this was a poor record. At the time of the revision of the Charter in 1813, therefore, the Company's monopoly came in for a severe attack and the demand for the withdrawal of its trade privileges became insistent. As a result of the revision, the Company lost its monopoly and Indian trade was thrown open to all Britons. Shortly afterwards, the restrictions on the settlement of British nationals in the interior of India were withdrawn and permission was given to the British capitalists to settle and invest their capital in the cultivation of land and in the plantation industries.

III THE ERA OF LAISSEZ FAIRE

A new era began in the relations between England and India with the ending of the monopoly of the Company and the throwing open of trade to private enterprise. The withdrawal of the monopoly produced a spectacular increase in British exports to India. From £1.8 million in 1814, the value of British merchandise imported into India rose to £4.5 million in 1829. Even these figures do not adequately express the extent of the increase which Mr. Crawford described as "unparalleled in the history of Commerce"[1], for the currency in 1814 showed a depreciation in value of 25 or 26 per cent below its standard value. If that fact is taken into consideration, the figure for 1814 would be reduced to £1.4 million.[2] Besides, prices in 1814 were high on account of the French wars; in 1828-29, the prices had fallen to their normal peace-time level. In quantitative terms, therefore, the British exports to India during the period of fifteen years must have increased fourfold. This is borne out by the following table of increase in the quantity of some of the more important items of British exports to India:[3]

Article	1814	1828	Absolute increase	Increase per cent
Copper (wrought and unwrought) cwt.	37,619	41,742	4,123	11
Iron, bar, bolts and cast (cwt) ..	186,454	438,629	252,175	135
Broad-cloth, stuffs and camlets (pieces)	17,790	49,502	31,712	178
Calicoes, plain and printed (yards) ..	680,234	34,843,110	34,162,876	5,022
Cotton twist (lbs)	8	4,558,185	4,558,177	56,977,213

[1] *Evidence before the Select Committee on East India Affairs, 1833, Report*, Vol. II Part II, p. 511

[2] *Ibid*, p. 511

[3] *Ibid.*

It had been confidently asserted on behalf of the East India Company in 1813 that "there was little probability either of increasing the quantity or of multiplying the number of commodities suited to the consumption of the people of India, and as little of augmenting the amount, or increasing the variety of articles which India could furnish in exchange".[1] The assertion, so far as India's capacity to absorb British manufactures was concerned, proved wrong in the face of the vigorous export drive that the British launched during the period.

Change in the structure of India's trade

One of the most important steps taken by Britain to extend its market in India was the imposition of the free trade policy on the country at a time when her industries were on the decline. India was forced to admit British imports either free or at nominal rates of duties, while Indian manufactures continued to be subjected to high import duties in England.[2] The policy immediately bore fruit. There was a rapid increase in India's foreign trade. The average annual value of India's foreign sea-borne trade rose from Rs. 18.64 crores (£18.64 millions) to Rs. 35.87 crores in the quinquennium 1846-51. The increase over the next five years was still more impressive. The average annual value of trade rose to Rs. 52.70 crores of which exports accounted for Rs. 26.85 crores and imports for Rs. 25.85 crores.

Ordinarily, expansion in trade is an advantage to a country. But because of the radical changes in the structure of her trade, the expansion of trade proved ruinous to Indian industry, and resulted in the impoverishment of the people. From the world's principal producer and exporter of cotton fabrics in the eighteenth century, India was reduced in the short period of seventy years to the position of one of the largest consumers of foreign manufactures. Cotton textiles came to form the major item of imports, instead of the largest item of exports that they were in the eighteenth century. The following table shows the remarkable change wrought in the

[1] *Ibid.*, p. 512

[2] Beauchamp, Joan, *British Imperialism in India*, p. 29

After the decline of Indian industry and the rise of the cotton industry in Manchester, the danger to British manufactures from competition of Indian textiles disappeared. The duties on Indian goods were consequently gradually lowered. In 1840, British cotton goods exported to India paid a duty of 3½ per cent while Indian cotton goods imported into England paid a duty of 10 per cent.

industrial position of India in the period of twenty years from 1814 to 1835:[1]

Year	British cotton manufactures exported to India	Indian cotton piece-goods imported into Great Britain
	(yards)	(yards)
1814	818,208	1,266,608
1821	19,138,726	534,495
1828	42,822,077	422,504
1835	51,777,277	306,068

Between 1814 and 1835, the exports of Indian cottons to Britain fell from nearly 1.3 million yards to a little over 0.3 million yards. Meanwhile, there was a decline in India's exports to other countries as well; for instance, the exports to America fell from 13,633 bales of cotton piece-goods to 258 bales in 1829, and Denmark which took 1,457 bales in 1800 never took more than 150 bales after 1820.

Not only did India lose foreign markets for its manufactures but its domestic market was inundated with foreign imports. The following table shows the increase in the value of British cotton exports to India:[2]

	In million pounds	
1813	.. 0·11	
1831	.. 1·65	(Exports to China are included in this figure.)
1835	.. 1·79	
1840	.. 3·86	
1845	.. 4 21	
1850	.. 5·22	
1855	.. 5·84	
1856	.. 6·30	

Silk and woollen fabrics, machinery and metal manufactures were the other commodities of imports into India. Competition with

[1] *Ibid.*, p. 29
[2] *Ibid*, p. 30

imported goods destroyed the Indian industry, deprived the artisan of his income and narrowed down the avenues of employment for labour. On the other hand, the exports which came to consist of raw cotton, raw silk, foodgrains, opium, indigo, and jute denuded the country of her agricultural surplus, raised the prices of raw materials and laid the foundation of future agricultural shortages and famines which held the country in their grip over the next one hundred years. Foreign trade in India was thus an instrument of exploitation of the resources of the country and of her economic enslavement.

Henry St. George Tucker[1], George Thompson[2] and other Englishmen of their way of thinking rued the commercial policy that Britain was following in India. "What is the commercial policy", wrote Henry St. George Tucker in 1833, "which we have adopted in this country in relation to India ? The silk manufactures and its piece-goods made of silk and cotton intermixed, have long since been excluded altogether from our markets; and of late, partly in consequence of the operation of a duty of 67 per cent but chiefly from the effect of superior machinery, the cotton fabrics which heretofore constituted the staple of India, have not only been displaced in this country but we actually export our cotton manufactures to supply a part of the consumption of our Asiatic possessions. India is thus reduced from the state of a manufacturing country to that of an agricultural country."[3] The East India Company represented to the Parliament in 1840 against the import duties in England on Indian goods which discouraged Indian industries. But such belated protests were of little avail, for the process of reducing India from an industrial to an agricultural country which was a part of the imperial design had, by then, been nearly completed.

IV. BALANCE OF PAYMENTS

One obstacle in the way of increasing British exports to India still remained. If India was to absorb the ever-increasing quantities of British manufactures, it must be enabled to produce and give something in return for the imports. The balance of payments problem was not easy to manage.[4] The increase in production in India did not

[1] Tucker, G., *Memorials of Indian Government*, London, 1852

[2] Thompson, *Six Lectures*, *op. cit*

[3] Letter to Huskisson, 1823, reprinted in *Memorials of Indian Government*, *op cit*, p. 494

[4] Some idea of the balance of payments difficulties of India may be had from the following figures In 1806, through the port of Calcutta, piece-goods of the value of £1,460,000 were exported; in 1836, the quantity of cotton piece-goods exported was worth

keep pace with the increase in imports. India's lack of purchasing power was proving an obstacle in the way of pushing forward the sale of British manufactures. Its principal foreign exchange earning industry, cotton-weaving, had been destroyed and instead of exporting cotton piece-goods, India itself was being flooded with cheap machine-made cotton cloth. Raw cotton was another commodity which it could sell to England, but the price of Indian cotton was higher and its quality poorer than that of the American cotton.[1] The demand for pepper, sugar and cinnamon had also fallen off considerably.

Besides, there was a heavy recession in the prices of Indian products in the world market so that the terms of trade had turned heavily against the country. The following table gives some idea of the extent of the fall in the prices of the principal commodities of export from India:[2]

	1793	1815	Increase or decrease per cent	1831	Decrease per cent over 1815
	s. d	s d.		s. d.	
Cottonwool per lb.	1-3/4	0-11½	−9	0-5	56
Indigo per lb	7-4½	8-10	+9	4-0	54
Rice per cwt.	None	23-9	——	14-10	39
Saltpetre per cwt	59-9	87-0	+45	36-0	58
Raw silk per lb	21-0	18-1	−13	13-7½	24
Cinnamon (Ceylon) per lb.	12-0	13-8	+13	8-9	35
Pepper, black, per lb.	1-2½	0-10½	−27	0-3½	64
Sugar per cwt	66-6	49-1	−26	26-2	46

The fall was attributed to the withdrawal of monopoly and the establishment of free trade with India.[3] But the major cause appears to have been the weakening of the demand for Indian products in the British market. The structure of India's export trade had undergone a radical change. Cotton and silk manufactures, which had in the past formed the bulk of Indian exports, were now the principal commodities of import. The demand for raw silk had declined, while raw cotton of India, as already pointed out, was considered to be of

£108,000 In 1805, the raw cotton exported was valued at £400,000; in 1835 at £487,000.

[1] *Select Committee Report, 1833*, Vol. II, Part II, p. 516

[2] *Ibid.*, p. 514

[3] *Ibid.*, p. 515

inferior quality. Demand for pepper and sugar had also fallen on account of the opening of new sources of supply. Besides, there was the problem of making payments of annual charges that arose out of India's political connections with England and which, in the absence of gold and silver, had to be remitted in the form of commodities. Under the circumstances, it was not surprising that the terms of trade moved against India.

Commenting on the balance of payments situation at the time of the revision of the Company's Charter in 1832, Mr. Mackillop stated before the Parliamentary sub-committee, "...very great difficulties exist in effecting remittances from India. To illustrate how this difficulty operates, I may observe that a great portion of the indigo, and also other articles imported during the last two years, have not realised here more than 1s. 3d. per rupee, while the mint value of that coin may be stated at 1s. 11¾d.; and hence it is that individuals as well as the Company, latterly have effected remittances by bringing home silver instead of goods."[1] For centuries India had exported its staples and other countries had to give gold and silver in exchange. Now the tables had been turned: India could give nothing but gold and silver in exchange for its imports. But India does not produce gold and silver, and as Mr. Mackillop stated, "this mode of remittance from India and China if continued, must check the import of goods from this country (England)".[2]

Remedies for adverse balance of payments

(*a*) *Development of agriculture*

One way to solve India's balance of payments problem and provide her with the necessary purchasing power to buy British goods was to develop her agricultural resources. Various trade associations of England urged before the Parliamentary Select Committee (in 1832) that every effort should be made to develop the agricultural resources of the country. The Manchester Chamber of Commerce, for instance, stated: "The improvement and increase of the exportable productions of India would doubtless be a great good to India and, not to India merely, but to this country. The improvement in the quality of Indian cotton is an object of paramount importance to the

[1] *Ibid*, p 577
[2] *Ibid.*, p. 577

prosperity of cotton manufactures of Great Britain so much so that every facility should be afforded to the speedy development of whatever India is capable of accomplishing this way."[1] The Glasgow Chamber of Commerce similarly thought that "every improvement or increase of the exportable productions of India would, no doubt, have that effect (of extending market for British goods in India)".[2]

In 1840 it had come to be widely recognised that Britain could not indefinitely continue to inundate India with her manufactures unless she enabled the latter to produce some commodities for exchange. Public agitation was set afoot in England for bringing pressure on the East India Company to develop the agricultural resources of India. It was suggested that land-tax should be reduced, means of irrigation be developed, improved varieties of commercial crops, particularly cotton, be introduced, and the raw cotton produced in India be given preference in the import trade of England over raw cotton produced in America which had ceased to be an English colony and where cotton was produced with the help of slave labour. This agitation, of which the six lectures delivered by George Thompson in 1839 to the East India Association[3] are a typical example, did not achieve much in the matter of the development of Indian agriculture or of the diversion of the British demand from the American to the Indian produce. But it helped in exposing the injustices perpetrated by England on India and the injury that its policy had caused to Indian agriculture.

Commenting on the bad quality of Indian cotton and its unsuitability for fabricating fine cloth in the British mills, Thompson said: "The soil of India lies under a curse. It is viewed by the cultivator not as a source of wealth to himself, but the scene of his thankless toil; from which he must reap a crop not to enrich himself but a stranger in the land who claims a proprietary right by virtue of conquest and deprives him of the entire surplus produce of his industry. It is hardly surprising that industry languishes and the march of improvement is stayed. The people are in the condition of serfs; they are virtually tenants-at-will. They are at the mercy of men whose sole aim is the collection of revenue. The maximum tax is too

[1] *Ibid*
[2] *Ibid*, p 578
[3] Thompson, George, *Six Lectures on the Resources of India*, London, 1841

heavy to be borne: it never has been reached, it never can be reached; the ryots, the cultivators, fall into arrears; they are from that moment liable to be crushed by the collector of the district who thinks he deals most mercifully with them, when he takes the last pound of cotton or grain of rice and leaves them to supplicate 'with bated breath and whispering humbleness' the assistance of the village banker to enable them to purchase a little seed to scatter upon the earth and to enable them to keep together the bodies and the souls of their beggared families until the next harvest appears."[1] What improvement, asked Thompson, could be expected in Indian agriculture under such conditions?

(b) Colonisation of India

As the Government would not extend protection to agriculture or aid to the development of other productive occupations in India, the remedy that suggested itself to the British manufacturers was the colonisation of India and the stimulation of production by the settlement of British nationals in the interior of the country, and the investment of British capital. The Liverpool East India Committee stated before the Parliamentary Select Committee: "We would, in particular, suggest that encouragement be given to men of talents, particularly acquainted with best modes of raising and improving the different products of India, to settle in the interior of the country; that encouragement and protection be given to men of capital to invest their property in land by grants in perpetuity on easy terms; and that facilities be afforded for the establishment of a free intercourse between different parts of the country, by the construction of bridges and roads."[2] The Glasgow Chamber of Commerce, similarly, desired that "every encouragement and facility consistent with the safety and tranquillity of India will be granted to British subjects going there, from whose skill, capital, enterprise, most beneficial results may reasonably be expected".[3] According to the Manchester Chamber of Commerce the "obvious" measure to increase the products and trade of India was "permitting British subjects to hold land".[4] "If injurious restrictions be removed", the Chamber continued, "and latitude given for the natural operation of British capital, skill, and enterprise

[1] *Ibid.*, p. 70
[2] *Select Committee Report*, Vol. II, Part II, p. 578
[3] *Ibid.*
[4] *Ibid.*

in aid of the fertility of the soil of India and the industrious habits and peaceable disposition of its inhabitants, everything will be done that is requisite."[1] Holt Mackenzie, when asked to state specifically the advantages to be derived in revenues by the Indian Government from the settlement of Europeans in that country, remarked: "I consider that every European who settles in any part of India must add something to the revenue; for he will be a profitable consumer, that is, he will consume articles capable of taxation. He will, I should hope, greatly improve the means of production, thereby adding largely to the general wealth of the country. His example will introduce among many of the natives some European habits, which are habits of greater comfort and expense than native habits; and without any change in the habits of the people, the miscellaneous taxes must increase with the increase of wealth, and the more abundant production of the objects of internal and external commerce. In the unsettled districts, every improvement in agriculture must add to the land rent of Government. To introduce irrigation where it is not now practised, is to render highly productive land that is now comparatively unproductive; and since the rent of all waste land not specially assigned belongs to the Government, there would be immediately, or at no distant time, an accession of revenue in all cases in which such land might be brought under tillage. I belive intercourse with Europeans leads to indulgence in the use of wine and spirits, which, though it may be lamented on the score of morals, must be beneficial to the revenue; their servants are generally better clothed, and the articles of clothing being subject to taxation, that would increase the revenue."[2] There was, besides, the great political advantage to be gained from stationing the nationals of the ruling country in the interior, for this would prevent the combination of people against the foreign rulers and scotch any intention on their part to revolt.

The restrictions regarding residence and settlement of Europeans in the interior of the country had been removed in 1824. During the following years vigorous attempts were made to encourage the penetration of India by British nationals and their capital. Land was offered to them either as freehold or on long leases of sixty years for purposes of cultivation and the establishment of plantation industries. Transit duties on the inland trade were withdrawn and the

[1] *Ibid*

[2] *Select Committee Report* (*1833*), Vol II, Part I, question No. 89, p. 11

whole trade and industry of India was thrown open to foreign enterprise.

Failure of the policy of colonisation

But India could not be colonised in the sense that America, Canada, Australia and New Zealand were, for it was a well-populated and highly developed country, whereas the latter were, at the time of settlement, just vast tracts of waste land awaiting development.

Moreover, Englishmen could not undertake the cultivation of small strips of land in competition with Indian farmers. The only crops that they found suitable for their enterprise were coffee and tea. The rest of the farming business was closed to them because of the peculiar agricultural situation in the country.

Secondly, the climate of India was very different from what an Englishman was used to at home. In the early days of British occupation of India, the death rate among those who came to this country was very high. Dysentery, smallpox, malaria and stomach complaints took a heavy toll of life. Those who escaped death suffered deterioration in health as a result of disease and the rigours of the Indian summer.

Finally, the Europeans could not succeed in competition with the Indians in business enterprises located in the interior of the country. The people of India are frugal, industrious and intelligent. Once an industry was established by a foreigner in the country, Indians would not lag behind; and their cost of living being lower, they would undersell the goods produced by Europeans. This difficulty had been foreseen by Munro who, in his evidence before the Parliamentary Committee of 1813 on East India Affairs, stated: "The people of India are as much a nation of shopkeepers as we are ourselves; they never lose sight of the shop, they carry it into all their concerns, religious and civil; all their holy places and resorts for pilgrims, are so many fairs for sale of goods of every kind; religion and trade are in India sister arts, the one is seldom found in any large assembly without the society of the other. It is this trading disposition of the natives, which induces me to think it impossible that any European traders can long remain in the interior of India, and that they must sooner or later all be driven to the coast; what the European trader eats and drinks in one month, would make a very decent mercantile profit for the Hindoo for twelve; they do not, therefore, meet on equal

terms; it is like two persons purchasing in the same market, the one paying a high duty, the other paying none...it is impossible, therefore, that he (the European) can long carry on the competition upon such an unequal footing; he may for a time with a large capital carry on some new manufacture, or improve some old one, such as indigo or sugar; the Hindoo will wait till he sees the success which follows the undertaking; if it is likely to be successful and to be permanent, he will engage in it and the European must quit the field. There can be no doubt, I think, that this cause will in time operate so as to force all Europeans to the sea-coast, and I can have little doubt but hereafter, when the Hindoos come to correspond directly with the merchants in England, that many of the agents now settled upon the coast, will, from the same cause, the superior economy and diligence of the Hindoos, be obliged to leave India."[1]

That subsequent events worked out exactly in accordance with these anticipations, speaks highly of the foresight of Munro. The British failed to convert India into an English settlement. Their capital flowed only into those industries and commercial activities from which Indians were excluded on account of the special privileges accorded to the British. Tea and coffee plantations, indigo manufacture, shipping, foreign exchange banks and insurance were the main objects of attention of foreign capital Instead of solving, this aggravated the balance of payments problem, for it added to the list of invisible imports which had to be paid for by the export of raw produce and food-stuffs from India.

(c) *Development of transport*

The improvement of the internal means of communication and transport and Dalhousie's plan for the construction of a network of railways in India fitted well into the British plans of subordinating Indian economy to the purposes of Britain. If the products of India were to be collected from the interior and if the consumption of British manufactures was to permeate the interior, it was necessary to provide cheap and easy means of transport in the country. The construction of railways would have another advantage also: it would provide a profitable channel of investment for British capital. It is

[1] *British Parliamentary Papers. House of Commons Returns, etc, 1812-13,* Vol. VII, Pt. 1, pages 150-51, Minutes of Evidence. on the Affairs of the East India Company (Evidence by Colonel Thomas Munro)

true that the work of construction of railways was taken up in right earnest only after the administration had passed from the Company to the British crown, but the policy of the East India Company was already pointing in that direction. The policy remained the same, only the pace was quickened after the upheaval of 1857.

V THE DRAIN OF WEALTH

The feature of India's foreign trade which had consequences of a far-reaching character for the economy of both India and England was the unrequited surplus of exports from India. The East India Company adopted the policy of purchasing Indian goods out of the revenue collected from Bengal and exporting them to England. The purchases were known as "investments". They constituted the "drain" of wealth from India. According to a statement[1] of the revenues and of Bengal during the first six years of the Company's administration, the net revenue of the country was £13,066,761 and the total expenses £9,027,609, leaving a net balance of £4,039,152, which was remitted in the form of goods to England. But this annual unrequited outflow of one-third of the country's net revenue did not represent the total drain on the economic resources of Bengal. Vast private fortunes were made in India and remitted home by the servants of the Company. No account of these remittances can be drawn up, but some idea of its extent may be obtained from the figures of exports and imports for the three years between 1766 and 1768 compiled by Harry Verelst, the then Governor of Bengal.[2] According to these figures, the total imports in the three years amounted to £624,375, while the total exports were valued at £5,311,250, leaving a balance of £4,686,875, or an annual average of £1·5 millions. The volume of this drain grew steadily over the years. In course of time it became a prominent point of attack on British rule by the Indian nationalists.

Opinions with regard to the extent of this drain in the later years differ. William Digby, after taking into account the transfer of treasure on private accounts, together with export surplus appearing in official trade statistics, estimates that "probably between Plassey and Waterloo a sum of £1,000 million was transferred from Indian

[1] *Fourth Report of the House of Commons, 1773*; see also Beauchamp, Joan, *op. cit.*, p. 25
[2] Harry Verelst, *View of the Rise, etc. of the British Government in India*, quoted in Beauchamp, *op. cit.*, p 26
[3] Digby, William, *Prosperous British India*, p. 33

hoards to English banks."[3] This gives an average of £17.2 millions per annum. Professor Furber, on the basis of figures of trade for ten "trading seasons", reaches the conclusion that "although there can be no doubt that a drain of Indian wealth in the sense above defined existed, it certainly did not reach vast proportions. The drain towards the West should not be reckoned as exceeding £1·9 million annually during the period 1783-93."[1] John Strachey thinks that "Professor Furber is nearer the mark", because "he is a recent and American investigator with no motive for minimising the figure."[2]

In the absence of the necessary data for making exact quantitative measurements, it is presumptous for any one to take sides in the controversy over the precise amount of the annual transfer of funds from India to England. If Digby's estimate appears exaggerated, Furber's is surely an under-estimate. For as he himself acknowledges, his conclusion lacks the basis of "full and accurate statistics of exports and imports for the entire continent."[3] Be that as it may, there is hardly any question about the fact that as a result of the conquest of India by Britain, the foreign trade of India was rendered an instrument of exploitation of the people of India.

India's loss and England's gain

The drain of wealth from India was a contributory factor in the industrial development of England. The available evidence leaves little doubt that the magnificent industrial structure of England which began to rise after Plassey was largely built up on the ruins of Indian manufactures. There was, according to the British historians themselves, a close relation between the Industrial Revolution in England and the establishment of British rule in India.

It was the Indian loot by the East India Company and its servants in the early days of British rule in Bengal that provided the funds which administered the necessary stimulus to industrial production in the initial stages of the Industrial Revolution.[4] Brooks Adams affirms: "the influx of the Indian treasure, by adding considerably to the nation's cash capital, not only increased its stock of energy, but added much to its flexibility and the rapidity of its movements.

"Very soon after Plassey, the Bengal plunder began to arrive in

[1] Furber, *John Company At Work* (Cambridge, 1948), p 305
[2] Strachey, John, *The End of Empire*, p 63
[3] Furber, *op cit*, p 305
[4] Strachey, John, *op cit.*, p 67

London and the effect appears to have been instantaneous.... Plassey was fought in 1757, and probably nothing has ever equalled the rapidity of the change that followed. In 1760 the flying shuttle appeared, and coal began to replace wood in smelting. In 1764 Hargreaves invented the spinning-jenny, in 1779 Crompton contrived the mule, in 1785 Cartwright patented the power-loom and, chief of all, in 1768 Watts matured the steam engine...But, though these machines served as outlets for the accelerating movement of time, they did not cause that acceleration. In themselves inventions are passive, many of the most important having lain dormant for centuries, waiting for a sufficient store of force to have accumulated to set them working. That store must always take the shape of money and money not hoarded, but in motion...Before the influx of the Indian treasure and the expansion of credit which followed no force sufficient for this purpose existed; and had Watts lived fifty years earlier, he and his inventions must have perished together.

"Possibly since the world began, no investment has ever yielded the profit reaped from the Indian plunder, because for nearly fifty years Great Britain stood without a competitor."[1]

From 1694 to 1757 the growth had been relatively slow; between 1760 and 1815 it was rapid in speed and prodigious in volume.

Cunningham is not explicit on the sources of finance for the Industrial Revolution in England, but as regards the reasons why the Revolution occurred after 1760 and not before, he supports Brooks Adams. He writes, "Inventions and discoveries often seem to be merely fortuitous; men are apt to regard the new machinery as the outcome of the special and unaccountable burst of inventive genius in the eighteenth century. But...to point out that Arkwright and Watts were fortunate in the fact that times were ripe for them, is not to detract from their merits. There had been many ingenious men from the time of William Lee and Dodo Dudley, but the conditions of their day were unfavourable to their success. The introduction of expensive implements, or processes, involves a large outlay; it is not worthwhile for any man, however energetic, to make the attempt, unless he has a considerable command of capital, and has access to large markets. In the eighteenth century these conditions were being more and more realised."[2]

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[1] Brooks Adams, *The Laws of Civilization and Decay*, pp. 259-60

[2] Cunningham, W., *Growth of English Industry and Commerce: Modern Times*, Part II, p. 610

On the other hand, it has been held in some quarters that it is wrong to call this export surplus a drain of wealth, for the payments from India represented the cost of "good" government, and peace and order that the British gave to India. As for the earlier period the testimony of John Strachey, whose ancestors held high posts in India, is conclusive. He writes, "But it may be asked, did not Bengal at least receive some recompense by way of good government and law and order for the tribute thus paid to its conquerors ? No doubt it did and in the fulness of time regular government and law and order were to be of value. But for some fifteen years after the conquest the fact that Bengal was now protected from being ravaged by its neighbours was of no advantage to the unhappy province. For it was now ravaged far more systematically by its new rulers. No Maratha raid ever devastated a countryside with the thoroughness with which both the Company, and above all, the Company's servants in their individual capacities, sucked dry the plains of Bengal. In fact in their blind rage for enrichment, they took more from Bengali peasants than those peasants could furnish and live. And the peasants duly died."[1]

Even the view that the good government and law and order established by the British were ultimately of value to the country needs qualification. For, the British military and civil administration was used more for the benefit of England than for the development of the resources of India and the enrichment of its people. There can be little doubt about the injustice to India involved in these payments or about the fact that the flow of wealth from India did help Britain in the process of her economic development in the initial stages of the Industrial Revolution.[2]

VI CONCLUSION

Sir Stampford Raffles, the English Governor of Java, said of the old Dutch Company: "The Dutch Company, actuated solely by the spirit of gain, and viewing their subjects with less regard or consideration than a West India planter formerly viewed a gang upon his estate, because the latter had paid the purchase money of human property, which the other had not, employed all the existing machinery of despotism to squeeze from the people their utmost mite of contribution, the last dregs of their labour, and thus aggravated the

[1] Strachey, John, *The End of Empire*, *op. cit.*, p. 41
[2] *Ibid.*, p 60

evils of a capricious and semi-barbarous Government, by working it with all the practised ingenuity of politicians, and all the monopolising selfishness of traders."[1] The English Company in India followed the ways of her Dutch sister in the East Indies.[2] It destroyed the trade and industry of the country. It started by excluding the Indian products from the European markets. It then "broke up the Indian handloom, and destroyed the spinning wheel" and, finally, "inundated the very mother country of cotton with cottons".[3] It oppressed the weavers and other artisans and perpetrated inhuman crimes to crush the rival producers: instances of thumbs of workmen being cut off to prevent them from winding raw silk or weaving fine cloth were not unknown. Over and above this, the British exacted a cruel and unjust annual tribute from India, which prevented any accumulation of capital or improvements in agriculture or industry. The productive organisation of India was destroyed and the country which was once known for its riches all the world over was reduced to a state of poverty, disease, misery and starvation.

The economic decline of the country was accompanied by a social revolution. The village community which fostered cooperative living was destroyed. New economic relations based on the Western ideas of individual property and enterprise, competition and market economy began to prevail. Marx saw in this social revolution a means for the fulfilment of man's destiny. "England it is true, in causing a social revolution in Hindustan", he wrote, "was actuated only by the vilest interests and was stupid in her manner of enforcing them. But that is not the question. The question is, can mankind fulfil its destiny without a fundamental revolution in the social state of Asia ? If not, whatever may have been the crimes of England she was the unconscious tool of history in bringing about that revolution."[4]

In England, too, the agrarian revolution had thrown labour out of land and increased unemployment, causing great misery and hardship. But the Industrial Revolution which followed, soon absorbed the unemployed labourers in the newly established manufacturing industries, so that the period of unemployment and hardship was cut short. In India, on the other hand, labour was released

[1] Quoted by Marx, *The British Rule in India*, vide Marx-Engels, *Selected Works* (Foreign Language Publishing House, Moscow), Vol I, p. 313

[2] *Ibid.*

[3] *Ibid*, p 315

[4] *Ibid* p 317

from industry, but there was no comparable development of industries or extension of agriculture to absorb that labour. The economic development of the country became an appendage of a foreign exploitative system. In India the human suffering caused by the social revolution was incalculably greater and much more prolonged.

By 1857, the work of economic revolution had been completed; meanwhile new forces had started the work of reconstruction and the establishment of a new order. The events of that year marked the definite close of the old era and the opening of a new chapter in India's history.

INDEX

E R R A T A

Page 208 Line 20 For "It was strange that he should imagine" read "It was difficult for him to imagine"

Page 214 Line 17· For "Panini's Kaumudi" read "Panini's Ashtadhyayi and Kaumudi"